

Restorative Dialogue Program



Portland
Community
Justice
Partnership



Health. Justice. Hope.

To: Senate Committee On Judiciary

RE: Support for SB 586

Dear Committee Members,

My name is Theresa Huggins. I am the Program Manager for restorative justice programming with Lutheran Community Services Northwest. I have 20 years of experience in restorative justice. Restorative Justice is centered around finding effective ways to repair harm. It is focused on finding healthy and productive ways to meet the needs of all parties involved. It is meant to allow those who caused harm to repair the harm in a way that serves those who were harmed and themselves. One of the most important aspects in this process of finding ways to repair harm is, - accountability. Accountability means to tell the truth. The people who caused harm must be honest about their actions. This becomes difficult when we can not ensure that what they say can't be used against them in the criminal justice system. I can assure you many of our clients are worried that they will be charged with a crime and that restorative justice is just a ploy from the criminal justice system to admit guilt. It is vital that we are able to assure them that when they face their truth, accept accountability for their actions, and do what it takes to repair the harm they are in fact using a legal process that can not be used against them in a future court of law. We need to be seen as a legal entity that is an alternative to hiding the truth and fearing to admit your guilt.

Our current system is designed for people to not to tell the truth.

We need to create laws that protect people when they are honest, not support a system that encourages people to deny the truth. In my past I had many attorneys who said, "Do not admit to anything". To me this meant to lie. I tell my clients now that we can not change what happened, but by being honest and facing the truth we can change how we react in the future. I want you all to consider that when you give restorative justice the legal protection to say, "This conversation is confidential and privileged" we will have a system that demands that people are honest and face their truth. Please support this confidentiality law for restorative justice practitioners.

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