
Senator Floyd Prozanski, Chair
Senate Committee on Judiciary
900 Court Street, NE.
Salem, OR 97301

February 9, 2023

Chair Prozanski, Vice-Chair Thatcher, and Members of the Committee,

Multnomah County strongly supports SB 586. Its passage, which makes restorative justice conversations confidential and fosters open, honest dialogue among participants, is a practical way to increase public safety while meaningfully supporting all impacted by crime.

Restorative justice offers a survivor-centered and trauma-informed alternative with demonstrated outcomes that benefit everyone — the person harmed, the person responsible and the community. Across the nation and around the globe, research shows the power and possibility of restorative justice. Restorative justice processes have been proven to: reduce recidivism rates; increase survivor satisfaction and support survivor healing; and decrease crime-related symptoms of post traumatic stress disorder and desire for violent revenge. All of these benefits cost Oregon taxpayers significantly less money than prosecution, probation, and incarceration.

For every \$1.00 spent on incarceration in Oregon, the state invests about \$0.01 on survivor services. Services for survivors are difficult to access and relatively scarce compared to the services invested in those who cause harm. This is true at the local, state and national levels. While the barriers survivors face as they navigate our systems are not new, the ongoing impacts of the pandemic have had a uniquely painful impact on survivors across our state.

The only person forced into a relationship with the criminal justice system is the victim. Yet it is often their needs and preferences that are the last thing to be considered, if they are even considered at all. For some victims of crime, choosing not to report what happened to them is their path to choosing safety. There are countless reasons they may choose not to engage with the criminal legal system.

Crime disproportionately impacts Black, Indigenous and other people of color. Survivors of color under-report crimes against them for fear of being blamed, disbelieved, ignored, or further harmed by our systems. In these scenarios the person who caused harm is never held accountable and the person harmed has little to no options or support for healing. This does not make our community safer.

Restorative justice supports survivors by helping them regain a sense of power. Open and honest dialogue is a core tenant of restorative justice that fosters agreement about how to repair the

harm done and its ongoing impacts. The person who caused harm takes responsibility for their actions and in the process provides answers to questions that no one else can answer and the adversarial court process doesn't allow for. For a survivor, this opportunity to get answers to questions about the crime and to form a coherent narrative is a critical piece to supporting trauma recovery and healing. At the same time, the person responsible gains a greater stake in the outcome, which is proven to result in a greater likelihood of follow through as compared to court ordered sanctions.

Restorative justice programs have been working in Oregon for over 10 years, and more recently the Oregon Legislature supported restorative justice alternatives to prosecution with the passage of HB2204 and the creation of the Restorative Justice Grant Program. Unfortunately, confidentiality protections only exist for specific restorative justice programs: the Psychiatric Review Board and the Department of Corrections programming. Oregon statute acknowledges that restorative justice processes are “most successful when participants are able to communicate openly and honestly about the crime and its impact, knowing that the participants’ communication will not be disclosed to other people or used against them later.”

SB586 is a clear pathway to center the voice and choice of survivors while granting restorative justice programs the protections they deserve and need in order to achieve successful outcomes that support survivor healing and offender accountability.

Sincerely,

Rhea DuMont
Community Justice Manager
Victim and Survivor Services
Multnomah County

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