



Dear Co-Chairs Sollman and Evans and members of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Public Safety:

My name is Debra Pennington Davis. I am the Restorative Justice Coordinator for Six Rivers Dispute Resolution Center. We are a 501(c)(3) non-profit community mediation center that provides low-cost conflict resolution services in the mid-Columbia region. Our service area includes Hood River, Wasco, Sherman, Gilliam, and Wheeler Counties and approximately 30 tribal in-lieu sites which are home to members of the following tribes: Warm Springs, Umatilla, Yakama, and Nez Perce.

Through the CJC's Restorative Justice Grant Program (RJGP), we are building a pre-charge restorative justice program to meet the needs of survivors and impacted community members. To build effective options for survivors in our rural communities, we are collaborating with system and community partners--including victim advocates from the DA's office and the Columbia River Intertribal Fish Commission Police Department. We are working in consultation with New York University's Center on Violence and Recovery (NYU CVR) which is dedicated to advancing knowledge on the causes and consequences of violence and trauma, and developing solutions that foster healing among individuals and families. In addition to assisting with program design, NYU CVR will provide intensive training to our restorative justice team, and their director of research will assist us in measuring our outcomes and contributing to restorative justice efforts across Oregon.

With input from our partners and community service providers, our program will provide research-informed processes for a variety of case types, and we expect to begin accepting cases in fall 2023. Additionally, this spring we are launching culturally appropriate restorative survivor support circles (SSC) that will promote healing, restore community, and allow SSC facilitators to offer survivor-centered feedback on the design of our pre-charge restorative justice program.

I first personally understood the need for restorative justice when someone I love dearly was impacted by a criminal act of harm. I learned that a single act of harm—when not adequately addressed—can have long lasting, life-disrupting impacts for survivors, their families, and their communities. I learned that the traditional criminal justice process can unintentionally produce secondary trauma and that survivors often need a more personal, meaningful accountability than the traditional system can offer. Many survivors have significant questions that only the responsible party can answer. Survivors often need the responsible party to understand how the crime has impacted their lives. They need to hear the responsible party honestly and voluntarily take responsibility for the harm they caused and to commit to repairing things where possible and taking steps to increase survivor and community safety.

Research tells us that when survivor needs are addressed through restorative justice processes, healing is more likely, mental health outcomes improve, and responsible parties are less likely to commit further acts of harm. Survivors who participate in restorative justice



processes report extremely high levels of satisfaction with the process. As we meet with members of our community to gather input for program design, we are hearing excitement, hope, and relief that this vital option will be available for survivors in our communities.

With our initial RJGP funding, we will have laid the foundation for an effective, research-supported program that meets our communities' unique needs, and our work to support survivors and impacted community members will be underway. Continued funding of the CJC's RJGP is essential to the next steps of program implementation. On behalf of Six Rivers and the communities we serve, I urge you to support Senate Bill 5505 and help us provide effective options for healing, meaningful accountability, and increased safety in our communities.

Sincerely,

Debra Pennington Davis