

Dear Senator Sollman, Representative Evans, and esteemed members of the Joint Committee on Ways & Means Subcommittee on Public Safety,

My name is Sophia Solano and I have been a student and practitioner of restorative justice for ten years. I have had the privilege and joy of growing and participating in several of Oregon's most successful restorative justice programs including Teen Justice Panels in Lincoln County with Lincoln Community Dispute Resolution, restorative circles and practices in Siletz and Eddyville charter schools with Partnership Against Alcohol and Drug Abuse, and Lane County's restorative justice adult diversion program with Center for Dialogue and Resolution. I currently work as the first Staff Coordinator for the Restorative Justice Coalition of Oregon (RJCO) and have been honored to work alongside many of our State's most passionate and talented leaders in this field.

I write to advocate wholeheartedly for the preservation and expansion of the Criminal Justice Commission (CJC)'s Restorative Justice Grant Program this biennium which has the potential to maintain essential and groundbreaking restorative programs and services, many of which are in the beginning stages of their design and implementation. The eight unique programs supported by the first distribution of CJC funds deserve the opportunity to continue in their projects and fulfill their fullest potential. The historic passing of HB2204 in 2021 was the most significant step the State of Oregon has made to support restorative justice alternatives to prosecution and punishment, positioning Oregon as a national leader in providing holistic, wrap-around services that prioritize both healing and true accountability to harm. The full impact of this new law has yet to be revealed, and depends deeply on renewed CJC investment.

In response to the available CJC funding in 2021, I organized a collective of my closest colleagues and friends within the field of conflict resolution that shared a vision to serve Oregon residents with restorative processes that exist completely outside of the criminal legal system. Conflict Artistry LLC perseveres in its mission to serve Oregon's many communities by providing services *before* contact with the system in order to relieve the pressure on overburdened court proceedings, avoid the harm caused to victims and survivors that are often overlooked, and instead empowering those who have been most impacted to tell the truth about what happened, make requests around their needs, and access resources that will contribute to their healing process. Our community-based and impact-oriented dialogue processes have been made possible through the initial investment awarded by the CJC in 2022, though our vision extends much further than what our current capacity can accommodate. Our ability and potential would be significantly heightened by the opportunity to reapply for funding in 2023.

Though I write on behalf of myself as an individual practitioner, I also keep in mind my program collective, the new cohort of HB2204 fund recipients, and the wider RJCO membership when I encourage the Legislature to recognize and reinforce the value of restorative justice work in Oregon by continuing what has been started with these important investments.

Sincerely,



Sophia Solano (*she/her/ella*)
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Restorative Justice Coalition of Oregon
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