

Submitter: Ruth Berkowitz  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: Senate Committee On Education  
Measure: SB600

I am on the Board of Six Rivers Dispute Resolution and today I ask you to support of SB600, which increases critical funding for Six Rivers Dispute Resolution Center. Six Rivers provides mediation and training for our communities in Hood River, Wasco, Sherman, Gilliam and Wheeler counties. We also cover Klickitat and Skamania counties in Washington.

Six Rivers core work is to help community members navigate conflict in an affordable way, during some of the most pressing issues of their lives. We receive critical funding, in part, through the Oregon Office of Community Dispute Resolution, located within the University of Oregon Law School. Despite doubly increased caseloads, priority requests from schools and community partners, this flat base funding has not increased to meet the need.

Please support SB 600, to ensure that Six Rivers is sustainably funded to address the needs of our community members. We help people resolve disputes faster and in a dignified and civil manner. We are considerably less expensive than going to court, we help keep people housed and off the streets, we teach people how to constructively resolve problems with one another, contributing to healthier, safer, and more peaceful communities.

This funding is critical for Six Rivers to continue to provide the core mediation and training services that they do.

Mediation is a growing field and in today's polarized world, our services are more important than ever. We add civility to problem solving and help our clients and the community work together to come to peaceful resolutions. I have been a mediator for 20 years and know that our mediated agreements can be as effective if not more effective than battling in court. We offer an efficient, affordable, and pragmatic way to solve problems.

Please support SB600 to sustainably fund the vital community work we provide.

Sincerely,

Ruth Berkowitz  
Six Rivers Board Member and mediator