

Dear Senator Bonham,

Thank you for the important work you are doing for our mid-Columbia region and state.

My name is Sarah Pickette and I am a citizen of Wasco County.

I am writing to ask for your 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.** They also cover Klickitat and Skamania counties in Washington.

Six Rivers receives funding, in part, through the Oregon Office of Community Dispute Resolution (OOCDR), a state program within the higher education budget. Legislators approve the allocations that OOCDR receives every biennium. This funding is distributed to 15 mediation centers across the state. **Despite doubly increased mediation caseloads and rising costs, the OOCDR budget line item has not received adequate funding in recent years.**

With SB 600, it's critical that OOCDR receives the full funding request for the next biennium, that includes an additional \$4.98 million, to ensure that Oregonians have access to justice, housing security, and safer communities.

This funding is critical for Six Rivers to continue to provide the core mediation and training services they do. They help address some of the most pressing issues facing our community and state – and in doing so, create safer communities, contribute to school success, increase housing security, and improve access to justice.

I recently mediated with Six Rivers. Their professionally trained staff helped me through a difficult situation in my life. Their initial interviewing process prepared my expectations of their procedures and what I could prepare for prior to our meeting. That direction kept my decisions focused and in my ownership. We were able to accomplish my goals in one appointment, prepare for the next level of necessary action, and limit any unnecessary legal action. Their ability to discuss and clarify our conversations was done honorably and respectfully, always keeping the decision process within my capability. I appreciated resolving my situation efficiently, clarifying and maintaining my decision processing, their professionalism, and the utmost respect of our patient/client relationship.

This is an outstanding organization that works diligently to guide innumerable difficult situations people cannot resolve alone. This is a vital necessity in our communities to limit if not eliminate the need for unnecessary legal action while empowering people to consider other options and solutions. The need is great and climbing.

Please support SB600 and reach out with any questions you have about the bill or the work we are doing in the mid-Columbia region. I would be happy to share more!



2/13/23

Sincerely,
Sarah Pickette