



Oregon

Tina Kotek, Governor

Criminal Justice Commission

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22 March 2023

RE: Senate Bill 344-1

Dear Chair Prozanski, Vice-Chair Thatcher, and Members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary:

I am writing to express my support for the -1 amendment to Senate Bill 344, which extends the sunset for the Justice Reinvestment Program, a grant program administered by the Oregon Criminal Justice Commission since its creation in 2013. The Commission believes that the extension of JRI is essential for maintaining the significant progress Oregon has made in reducing our reliance on expensive prison beds for persons convicted of non-violent offenses and avoiding new prison construction. Further, a portion of avoided prison construction and maintenance costs are reinvested as Justice Reinvestment Program funds and represent an important source of support for treatment and housing for justice involved individuals as well as for victims of crime.

Background

Between 2000 and 2012, the prison population in Oregon increased by nearly 50 percent, from 9,500 individuals to 14,250, while the state's biannual corrections costs increased by 40 percent to \$1.3 billion. Based on this growth trajectory, in 2013, the state was faced with the need to construct a new men's prison, which was estimated to cost at least \$600 million, as well as with the need to reopen two vacant institutions to house additional women adults in custody.

In response to these unprecedented prison population challenges, the Oregon Legislature, in partnership with then Governor Kitzhaber, passed House Bill 3194, which aimed to: (i) slow the growth in Oregon's prison population, (ii) avoid new prison construction, and (iii) invest in local

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programming and practices to reduce recidivism, while holding individuals accountable and protecting public safety. To meet these goals, House Bill 3194:

- Expanded eligibility for presumptive probation sentences to marijuana offenses and driving with a suspended or revoked license,
- Reduced the use of presumptive prison sentences for certain property crimes,
- Removed mandatory minimum sentences for certain repeat drug offenses,
- Expanded and strengthened the state's prison reentry program, also known as Short-Term Transitional Leave, and
- Created the Justice Reinvestment Program, which supports local counties' efforts in meeting the goals of House Bill 3194 as well as supports the introduction and use of new community supervision programs and practices.

Program Highlights

The Justice Reinvestment Program supports a variety of local programs and services, as all funding is statutorily required to be passed through to Oregon's counties. Highlights of the types of services and programs funded during the current biennium include:

- Nearly 20 percent of JRI funds are devoted to treatment and housing, with over \$6.15 million devoted to treatment, including alcohol and drug counselors, qualified mental health professionals, and clinicians in jails, as well as \$2.2 million devoted to housing, sober housing, transitional housing, and related expenses.
- 10 percent of JRI funds, or approximately \$4.1 million, support victim services programming across the state. In many Oregon counties, without JRI support, no victim services would be available.
- Over \$3.9 million devoted to funding pretrial programs in nine counties, which provides supervision and compliance monitoring for defendants released pretrial.
- Almost \$7 million devoted to funding targeted downward departure programs, which seek to avoid costly prison sentences for otherwise prison-bound individuals through the use of intensive community supervision.
- JRI funds approximately 192 positions in local communities statewide. The largest percentage of these positions (~38 percent) provide or coordinate treatment and/or wrap-around services for justice involved individuals.
- Feedback from counties acknowledge that participation in the JRI program has helped improve coordination, communication, and accountability within local justice systems, which has been critical to implementing and/or sustaining evidence-based practices.

Outcomes

- Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the *male* prison population was 8 percent below levels forecasted before the creation of JRI in 2013, representing over 1,100 men.
- Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the *female* prison population was 14 percent below levels forecasted before the creation of JRI in 2013, representing nearly 200 women.

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- According to the biannual [HB 3194 Cost Avoidance Report](#), the Justice Reinvestment Program has resulted in net avoided costs of \$635 million as of January 2023, against total program investments of \$200 million since 2013.
- JRI funding supports counties' ability to accept Short-Term Transitional Leave clients, which has saved 144,175 prison bed days (prison bed costs range from \$24.30 per day to \$140 per day).

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of the continuation of the Justice Reinvestment Program. Please let me know if you have any questions or require any additional information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ken Sanchagrin". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Ken Sanchagrin
Executive Director
Oregon Criminal Justice Commission