

Submitter: Jane Backen  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: House Committee On Judiciary  
Measure: SB586

April 7, 2023

To the House Committee On Judiciary,

My name is Jane Backen and I work in Portland, Oregon. I am writing to express my support for Senate Bill 586 and making restorative justice communications confidential. Like ORS 36.220 through 36.238 authorize state agencies to make mediation communications confidential, I urge you to see SB586 for the immense value it holds in making restorative justice communications confidential. In 2021, the legislature took an important step by investing in restorative justice and its use as an alternative to prosecution. There is incredible potential in these developing programs to improve public safety, reduce the state's reliance on incarceration, and provide healing for crime survivors. Making confidential the communications in these restorative justice programs is a necessary next step.

I care about making restorative justice communications confidential because restorative justice provides victims and survivors with a valuable option for healing and accountability, which necessitates authentic sharing and honest accountability. Restorative justice empowers people to acknowledge, take responsibility for and work towards repairing the harm they caused. There are strong benefits for everyone involved in restorative justice processes; the survivor, the person responsible for the harm, and the broader community. Data from programs across America and the globe demonstrates high levels of success related to increased survivor satisfaction rates, lowered recidivism rates, and lowered costs when compared to criminal justice responses. Oregon already has a thriving restorative justice community of practitioners, who regularly meet through the Restorative Justice Coalition of Oregon and through other channels, and discuss best practices through the growth of restorative practices and programs. Some of the current counties where restorative justice is practiced include: Clackamas, Deschutes, Jackson, Josephine, Lane, Lincoln, Multnomah, Polk, Wasco, and Washington. Several tribes have peacemaking courts that incorporate similar practices.

As a resident of Portland and as someone born and raised in Oregon, it is important to me that restorative justice continues to be practiced in my community for the benefit of those harmed, those responsible for causing harm, and their surrounding community members. This is a matter of long-term positive change and community support.

In conclusion, I am grateful to live in a state that is a national leader in restorative justice programming. I believe that it is very important for Oregon to continue supporting alternatives to prosecution and incarceration like restorative justice. Making confidential the restorative justice communications that are already happening across the state is a necessary next step.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Jane C. Backen