

April 8, 2023

The Honorable Co Chairs Steiner and Sanchez
Joint Committee on Ways and Means

Subject: Senate Bill 5506

Dear Co-Chairs Steiner and Sanchez and Members of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means:

Our names are Nathaline Frener and Alexxis Robinson-Woods, and we serve as Grant Fund Coordinators with the Oregon Department of Justice's Community Violence Intervention and Prevention (CVI) Grant Program. We are writing to thank you for your current investment in CVI programs and services and to request support of continued CVI funding through SB 5506.

Background

In 2022, the legislature made a bipartisan investment in community violence prevention. HB 5202 (2022) directed \$15 million in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to the Oregon Department of Justice's Crime Victim and Survivor Services Division to make grants to community-based organizations for violence reduction, intervention and prevention initiatives.

Community violence happens between unrelated individuals, who may nor may not know each other, generally outside the home. Examples include assaults or fights among groups and shootings in public places, such as schools and on the streets. CVI programming and services offer evidence-informed strategies to reduce violence through tailored community-centered initiatives.

Community Violence Intervention Program Outreach and Development

By the Fall of 2022, DOJ obtained legislative approval and funding to staff the CVI program. In the first three months of 2023, we focused on outreach to nonprofit community-based organizations and federally recognized Tribal nations offering programs and services in all of Oregon's 36 counties. Each community has different CVI concerns and needs, so we worked hard to identify those needs and how this grant funding can address them.

To date, we have met individually with almost 40 organizations; held a tri-county presentation with over 60 attendees from organizations throughout Clackamas, Multnomah, and Washington counties; and hosted open public information virtual meetings with approximately 75 individuals in attendance. In total, we have met with over 200 people representing over 100 organizations serving Oregon communities. We continue to engage with new organizations.

The organizations applying for these non-competitive grants hope to expand current culturally responsive services including afterschool programs, group violence interventions, job training and employment programs, neighborhood change agent programs, street outreach, mediation

training, mentoring programs, and restorative justice programs—all CVI evidence informed programming and services.

With initial outreach completed, the grant opened for applications on March 10, 2023, and will close on April 24, 2023. We will review the applications in May and will work to distribute the funds in June. The current grant cycle is July 2023- December 2024.

What We Are Hearing

The messages we heard consistently throughout the state and in our conversations with the people providing services include deep gratitude and appreciation for the state's initial funding for community-based violence intervention and prevention programming and services.

We also heard that it is critical that the funding is not a one-time investment, but rather a continued commitment to, and funding for, community violence intervention and prevention programs and services. We heard that one time funding can be harmful to communities, in that the organizations stand to lose the trust of those they are serving, including youth, when the funding to provide needed programs and services disappears. And with that, the organizations lose the opportunity to positively impact lives around the state.

One executive director said it so well: "We do not have a violence issue, we have an investment issue."

Anticipated Impacts of Continued Funding

Continued funding will allow community-based organizations and federally recognized tribal nations to provide critical ongoing community violence intervention and prevention programs and services throughout the state.

The continued funding will ensure that the program expansions taking place under HB 5202 funding can endure beyond December 2024, and most importantly, that individuals being served by CVI programs and services do not experience disruption to services at the end of the grant cycle.

We respectfully request your continued investment in and support for this important program.

Submitted by:

Nathaline Frener and Alexxis Robinson-Woods, Grant Fund Coordinators
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