

# Testimony

Joint Committee on Ways and Means  
2023 Regular Session  
Umpqua Community College Jacoby Auditorium  
Roseburg, Oregon 97470  
April 21, 2023

Regarding: SB 5506

Thank you for your time and consideration of this testimony. I am writing to you to encourage the continuation of state and federal funds provided through grant programs in Oregon, but I want to elaborate on the benefits and issues faced in Douglas County. The biggest challenges faced in our community are the laws being passed making it more difficult for law enforcement to manage situations necessary to have a safe and well-functioning community. The decriminalization of drugs has reduced the incentives to get people off the street, out of jail and in treatment programs. This has generated a public safety concern.

Grant programs have allowed us opportunities to help people shed the burden of drugs and the detrimental effects to their life through the H.O.P.E. Drug Court Program. Mental Health Court is another program option that is an alternative due to the lack of facilities and beds available in the state. The programs use problem solving strategies to address the causes of criminal activity and substance use disorders. The goal is to teach participants to become productive law-abiding citizens which reduces recidivism and creates a healthier community. During this last year, 26 people graduated from the Drug Court Program and saved 717 months of prison time which equated to \$4,237,470 saved. Mental Health Court had 13 graduates. This type of success has proven why providing structure, supervision, ongoing treatment, and judicial oversight can have a positive outcome for a person's rehabilitation, growth, and vitality. The success stories witnessed have proven the importance of the programs offered. Graduates feel a new sense of purpose, hope, go back to school, start their employment career, reconnect with family, and continue with local programs to take in the full benefits of life.

Success stories incentivize organizations to keep helping those in need. The unfortunate other side are organizations and local government agencies having to shift their focus from maintaining and beautifying parks and responding to standard emergencies to being full-time cleanup crews from the homeless leaving enormous amounts of trash, oversized camps that contaminate local waterways, graffiti, calls for fights in the camps, theft, overdoses, assault, or just plain destruction of property. Without the consequence of jail or prison time for crimes, communities will continue to deteriorate, crime will escalate, and overdoses will continue to rise. Narcan is not proving as useful with the new types of tranquilizer mixes and other variations that are being added to fentanyl that are sold on the streets. Drugs are damaging brains and leaving people incapable of rational thought or the will to want a sober and clean life. It isn't until continued other crimes happen in combination with their drug addiction that we can enforce incarceration and/or programs.

We need your help. Grant funds provide tools needed to offer outreach in the community, help those ready to know a life of sobriety, and reduce recidivism rates for jail and/or prison. I have been out in the community with our local mobile navigation group called Connecting Point. They are a collaborative group of local agencies, nonprofits, churches, and like-minded people who want to help those experiencing homelessness, mental health breaks and drug addiction. Together, they provide food, clothing, testing kits, Narcan, information for treatments, employment help, housing assistance, identification paperwork, SSI and more. I witness the harsh existence the unhoused live and experience, and it is not getting better.

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Another program that benefits from grant funding is the IMPACTS program. Adapt Integrated Health Care in cooperation with the Roseburg Police Department, provides solution-oriented community response to mental health crises. During this last quarter, the program provided 309 encounters, 269 services and 28 jail in-reaches including substance use treatment coordination, housing coordination, child welfare coordination and transportation upon release. The Mobile Crisis teams can handle calls on their own if the person is known and not a threat, otherwise law enforcement will assist to ensure everyone's safety. The crisis teams help to increase stability, access to treatment, and reduce the occurrence of further crisis events. There is a newly added 988 crisis line that is gaining momentum with an increased call volume. The Sobering Center is an option that continues to help divert people from the hospital and jail to refer them to detox and inpatient substance abuse disorder treatment. These services are vital to the area to decrease emergency room visits, law enforcement calls and to provide necessary treatment through local options.

The next issue is the increasing number of youths in the county experiencing homelessness. Without funding programs, these youth are faced with challenges that could funnel them into the pathway of adult homelessness, drugs, crime, trafficking, etc. The cycle needs to end, and we have community groups and members ready to help, but funds are needed. No child should have to experience concerns with where they are going to be able to sleep, get their next meal, have clothing or money to get essentials necessary to survive and go to school.

The local Connecting Point is working on a new system to obtain better statistics for people served, the number of unhoused adults and youth, and what is provided to help them survive. Douglas County is continually seeking and working with participants for the Drug and Mental Health Court programs, including the Residential Substance Abuse Treatment program (RSAT) while incarcerated. Please consider the continuation of funding opportunities for communities such as Roseburg who are working hard to help combat the problems for which we are faced.

It's time to discover the best way to help people live and let go of their survival mode mentality. Handouts are not helping. Funding for programs and housing is the best option to give people a chance to fully live again. Thank you for your time reading this testimony.

Respectfully submitted,

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Douglas County LPSCC Coordinator