

Submitter: Carleene Houk

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means

Measure: SB5506

Chair Steiner, Chair Sanchez, and members of the Ways and Means Committee:

My name is Carleene Houk and I live in Portland, Oregon. Currently, I am a paralegal at a civil rights law firm, but I previously worked in public defense. I am writing to express my support for continued funding of the Criminal Justice Commission's Restorative Justice Grant Program (RJGP).

I care about Oregon continuing to fund the Restorative Justice Grant Program because there are strong benefits for everyone involved: the survivor, the person responsible for the harm, and the broader community, leading to true accountability and reduced recidivism.

When I was working in public defense, I learned that public defenders often advise their clients to avoid taking accountability for the wrongdoings they have committed because our system is set up to punish people who acknowledge the harm they have caused. Our system is deeply flawed in that way – the best outcomes in criminal defense almost always come from denying the experiences of harmed parties. Restorative Justice gives people a way to own up to their errors and attempt to resolve conflict without the threat of prison or excessive punishment. In that way, it ensures that a person's efforts to heal the pain they've caused are authentic and responsive to the needs of those harmed by their actions.

As a resident of Multnomah County, it is important to me that restorative justice continues to be practiced in my community because I feel safer knowing that this option is available to survivors and people who commit harm.

In conclusion I am proud to live in a state that is a national leader in restorative justice programming. I strongly believe that the legislature should continue funding the Criminal Justice Commission's Restorative Justice Grant Program.

Thank you,

Carleene Houk