

Submitter: Keiler Beers

Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On Public Safety

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB500

Co-Chair Broadman, Co-Chair Evans, and members of the committee, my name is Keiler Beers, and I'm a public defender who represents youth in delinquency cases.

I'm asking for your support of the \$8 million appropriation to the the Restorative Justice Grant Program, and that it become part of the CJC's current service level budget.

In a time when the criminal legal system is overburdened and resulting in many defendants across the state going without attorneys, it is more important than ever that there are community driven alternatives available.

I have seen firsthand in my clients who have engaged in the process how restorative justice provides a meaningful opportunity for them to engage with the harm they have caused. I work with young people- it is a critical age for them to be able to learn tools of empathy, accountability and responsibility, and restorative justice can do just that. Rather than serving time in a correctional facility or on probation where they will largely not be asked to actually reckon with the harm caused, restorative justice asks them to meet head on the impacts of their actions and consider how it affected the life of another person. Study after study has shown that recidivism rates of restorative justice programs are far lower than that of traditional prosecution, and it's because of that change in behavior.

It accomplishes the central aims of our legal system, which is to protect those who have been harmed and prevent future harm. And it does so without overburdening the system with cases that don't need defense attorneys, district attorneys and judges to resolve. But while restorative justice programming is more cost-efficient than traditional prosecution, it does still require funding to hire and train staff who can lead the process. In particular, a well-funded restorative justice program is better situated to hire people who will best represent both the harmed parties and my clients.

And so I ask for your support of the \$8 million appropriation and that the Restorative Justice Grant Program become part of the CJC's current service level budget.

Thank you,

Keiler Beers