



WASHINGTON COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Conserving the Peace Through Values Driven Service
Sheriff Pat Garrett

March 25, 2015

Senator Alan Bates (Co-Chair)
Representative Nancy Nathanson (Co-Chair) and
Human Services Legislative Subcommittee Members
on Ways and Means
900 Court Street NE, Rm H-178
Salem, OR 97301

Re: SB 5526 Testimony

Dear Human Services Legislative Subcommittee members:

I am here to support increased funding to Community Mental Health Programs, also known as CMHPs. Safety net services are the role of CMHPs. In Washington County we have seen how well the partnerships between the Mental Health Program and the Sheriff's Office can work. I'd like to share two examples of the work we have been able to accomplish with the partnership between the Sheriff's office and the Mental Health Program.

First, our Mental Health Response Team (MHRT) is a pairing of a mental health clinician with a patrol deputy. Last year they intervened in over 1,178 crisis episodes. This involved 3,245 contacts as the team often saw the same individual multiple times to assist them in connecting to treatment.

We have many examples of where use of force did not occur because of a modified response by the team. More importantly, we know of at least one situation where intervention by the team resulted in saving the life of an individual. The team was asked to intervene with a retired gentleman who was threatening others and at high risk of hurting himself or those around him. In the course of the intervention, the team was able to get this individual connected to his doctor who discovered a brain tumor that was causing him to have psychotic symptoms. As a result of the team's intervention, the individual is now in treatment for his medical condition. MHRT demonstrates the power of combining disciplines to provide the best support to our community members in an effective manner.

Another program that illustrates the support that county mental health provides the Sheriff's Office is the recent Jail diversion program that was initiated by the CMHP. This program uses data and a care coordinator approach to identify and work with individuals who are frequently in Jail and who are severely mentally ill. The preliminary results are positive, after nine

months the program has served 12 individuals. For these individuals, the program produced the following results:

- A 30% drop in jail bed days
- A 50% decrease in bookings

While these numbers are preliminary, they represent about 40 fewer bookings and over 500 fewer bed days for those 12 individuals over the course of a year. These are safety net programs that really belong at the county level since they serve all members of our community. The primary limitation of these programs is adequate funding to ensure that they, along with associated treatment and support systems, are available when needed.

We have an opportunity to increase the effectiveness of our Mental Health programs communities across Oregon. I strongly encourage you to increase funding of Community Mental Health Programs – it's money well spent that increases public safety and serves our mentally ill populations well.

Sincerely,



Pat Garrett

Washington County Sheriff