

Subject: Justice and Accountability Act HB 3064

To: Chair Jennifer Williamson, Vice-Chair Chris Gorsek, Vice-Chair Sprenger and all the members of the House Committee on Judiciary

From: Central City Concern

Date: 3/14/2019

Central City Concern is a non-profit direct service organization that provides integrated primary and behavioral health care, supportive and affordable housing, and employment services to people impacted by homelessness in the Tri-County area. Central City Concern operates about 2,000 units of affordable housing, serves 9,000 patients annually through our 13 Federally Qualified Health Centers, makes 1,200 job placements annually and operates social services for the community justice programs in Multnomah and Clackamas counties. This year we are celebrating 40 years of service to our communities.

As part of our work to support people experiencing homelessness in the Portland Metro Area we have built partnership to create programs that are specifically for individuals who have engaged with the criminal justice system. We partner with Multnomah and Clackamas counties to operate the Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD) program to create opportunities for people to be diverted from the costly criminal justice system into social services that will actually address the root causes of their engagement with the justice system. Through our partnership with Multnomah County's Department of Community Justice and the Joint Office of Homeless Services we also operate the Stabilization Treatment Preparation program, the Parole Transition Program and Flip the Script re-entry program. These programs provides housing upon release or at point of diversion and opportunities to connect with health and employment services. In addition, culturally responsive services and self-advocacy are integrated into the services. We believe these types of community based services are critical to addressing recidivism and prevention of engagement with the criminal justice system.

The [Behavioral Health Justice Reinvestment Steering Committee](#) project has found, what many of us already suspected, the criminal justice system is full of people of color who are sick and poor. In their fourth and final presentation they showed that 49% of people booked in Oregon were on the Oregon Health Plan (OHP). Of those that had 4 or more bookings in the last year, 29% were experiencing a mental illness and 45% were experiencing substance use disorder; these rates are several times higher than in the average OHP population.

HB 3064 makes some critical changes, for the first time Oregon law will be explicit about the goals of the Justice Reinvestment Grant fund to support cohesive and shared visions. It will set a clear standard for review and start moving towards better data collection. It will open up the commission to community representatives to bring the perspectives of those most impacted to the table, to speak with their own voice and insight.

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We also support amendments that ensure technical assistance is available to local communities as they attempt to challenge and push their systems to try new things and achieve the goals of the Justice Reinvestment Grant program. We know change is hard and this grant program is attempting to change both perception and the realities of the justice system. Sometimes that may result in false starts and missteps, we support accountability that supports innovation. Technical assistance is one thing the state can do to encourage local communities to face the challenges knowing that they have access to guidance, education and support from the state.

Major changes are needed to address the complex social issues facing our communities every day. Avoiding over criminalization can help our social service interventions go further and have deeper impacts, especially where it intersects with housing and substance use disorder. For all these reasons we support HB 3064 and we hope that you will too.

Thank you,

Freda Cesar, Chief Equity Officer

Billy Anfield, Advocacy Coordinator, Flip the Script

Elissa Black, Program Manager, Employment Access Center

Lisa Bonner Brown, Housing Specialist, Parole Transition Program

Ronald Williams, Peer Support Specialist I, Parole Transition Program

David Jefferson, Employment Specialist II, Parole Transition Program

Gary Cobb, Project Referral Coordinator, Public Policy