



Office of Community Involvement



DCJ Community Budget Advisory Committee

TO: Chair Jessica Vega Pederson and Board of County Commissioners (3) pages

FROM: Department of Community Justice Community Budget Advisory Committee

DATE: April 25, 2024

SUBJECT: DCJ Community Budget Advisory Committee Report & Recommendations

Introduction

April is National Second Chance Act Month, commemorating the passage of the historic and bi-partisan law in 2008 that authorized a federal investment to reduce recidivism and increase public safety, while reducing corrections costs to local communities. The Act recognizes that the over 2 million Americans coming out of jails and prisons face complex challenges reintegrating into society, including those relating to mental health, substance use, housing and homelessness, education and employment, and providing for their children and families.

Given the remarks of the Chair in her recent 2024 State of the County address, as well as her comments on the FY 2025 budget, we feel that this anniversary of the passage of this historic Act is particularly resonant with the issues currently facing our county, and its spirit can serve as a guide for how we move forward in our approach to Community Justice. The Multnomah County Department of Community Justice (DCJ) has multiple programs that make strong efforts to give our County's citizens important Second Chances. This is done through a host of programs that take place pre-sentencing, at jails and other correctional facilities, as well as in the community for both offenders and those who are victims of crime.

We thank the the Chair Vega Pederson and the Board of County Commissioners for their efforts to persuade the State of Oregon to live up to its agreements with the County to fund these programs, but we also ask that the board continue to push State lawmakers on this issue, as a significant portion of this year's budget shortfall is due to a lack of State funding. Simply put, the people served by the DCJ have far more serious mental health, substance abuse, and housing concerns that require more time and resources than in the past.

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It is for that reason that, in lieu of improved State funding, we members of the DCJ Community Budget Advisory Committee fully endorse and support the proposed FY 2025 budget submittal by the DCJ.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The DCJ Community Budget Advisory Committee is committed to helping achieve a safe county for all residents. We affirm that the DCJ is a nationally recognized pioneer in juvenile justice, gun violence reduction, and in helping youth and adults obtain mental health and substance abuse treatment and social services. We encourage County leaders to build on these successful programs by bolstering this department's professional staff with the support and resources they need. We urge County leadership to prioritize those services that promote true community safety, rather than inflating the funding of supervision and law enforcement programs. Specifically, this means investing in culturally specific, community based programs and victim services throughout the County and creating a working environment that is safe for all.

PROCESS

During 2023 and 2024, the DCJ Community Budget Advisory Committee met monthly with DCJ staff, visited various DCJ sites to learn about their programs, and were educated on the County budget process. The DCJ Community Budget Advisory Committee appreciates having the opportunity to review and speak with DCJ staff about the Department's budget, to gain a better understanding of the issues facing the department and the budget process. We encourage the department and the Chair's Office, as well as the Office of Community Involvement, to continue to explore ways to increase transparency, timeliness, and engagement for the Multnomah County community in the budget process.

In order to enable better engagement, we would suggest more intentional efforts to expand the membership of the Community Budget Advisory Committees. Two obvious first steps would be offering stipends to committee members and more aggressive recruitment of affected populations. Stipends would enable more consistent attendance and participation, especially from those community members who are lower income. For the Community Justice Advisory Committee in particular, an effort to recruit members who have directly interacted with the

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criminal justice system would lead to a sharpened focus on those programs which help justice involved individuals the most. Efforts like these to expand the Community Budget Advisory Committees would lead to richer dialogue and a better representation of the community in the budget process.

BUDGET/PROGRAM OFFERS FEEDBACK

We urge County leadership to consider a reduction in the supervision population and reallocate funding from supervision-related services toward victim services and culturally specific community based programs. These programs are underfunded, but they serve an increasing number of individuals. We also want to celebrate the successful work of the DCJ employees who are using innovative approaches and taking a whole-person and team-based approach with their clients. We urge the County leaders to require “warm-hand-offs”, so that there is a seamless transition between departments and programs. With this approach personal success is encouraged and the investment the County has made in the individual and for community safety is protected. This means that mental health, housing, and other services County and contractor staff provide are involved earlier in the transition process, and that the resources and people of the community are engaged.

DEPARTMENT BUDGET/PROGRAM OFFER RECOMMENDATIONS

We call out several DCJ initiatives and program offers for your special consideration.

The first is Program # 50041: DCJ's Stabilization and Readiness Program (SARP). This is an incredible program serving individuals struggling with mental illness, who are currently on supervision, many of whom are unsheltered. This program has over a 50% success rate in getting participants into housing, 40% success rate in getting participants into substance abuse treatment, and an 80% success rate in getting participants into case management or skill training. Strongly BIPOC, this population is at high risk for reoffending and 64% have been convicted of a crime against a person. The DCJ Community Budget Advisory Committee recommends increasing the funding for this program at the level requested by the DCJ so that the department can serve more people at this crucial and necessary point of intervention.

In keeping with the Chair's “Whole County” approach, the DCJ experience with the SARP Day Center could also be a helpful model for the Health Department as it opens up a Day Center in

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St Johns. The different departments of the County should use these Day Centers as a sort of “one stop shop” to provide services to unsheltered and mentally ill individuals.

The second is Program Offer # 50066A: Juvenile Restorative Practices Team, and a similar Program Offer # 50013 funding culturally responsive programming. Together these programs continue and build upon the DCJ's nationally recognized models of diversion and applying restorative justice with juveniles. It also includes staffing for the DCJ to more fully participate in County-City teams that deal with preventing gun violence by juveniles. The DCJ has expertise and a different perspective, which will prove valuable in these efforts.

The third Program is Program #50003A: DCJ Victim and Survivor Support Services. Provide at least \$100,000 to provide for supplemental support for victims and survivors (shelter, groceries, transportation etc.). These funds are used as a last resort when other community resources have been exhausted, so removing them would be especially painful for those who need them.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Committee would like to give special thanks to all DCJ staff that took time out of their evenings to attend our monthly meetings and provide us with valuable information about the budget and the department. In particular, Tami Wallis facilitated and arranged our meetings, and she was always available to respond to our questions. We appreciate your commitment to this work!