

September 12, 2011

To: Board of Commissioners, Multnomah County

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on the proposed cuts to the Sheriff's Office budget resulting from the State's reduction in 1145 funds to the County. As many have commented to you already, we understand that as fiduciaries of County funds you have to make some very tough choices, not only in regards to current cuts but for cuts in the future. When looking at where cuts are to come from, we applaud you for having departments focus on their needs and priorities and not focusing specifically on which of their programs have 1145 cuts. This gives department experts the ability to develop an overall plan that best supports County services.

Our understanding is that the Sheriff's Office proposed cuts are approximately \$1,090,000. To meet this shortfall the Sheriff is compelled to close one dorm (59 beds) at MCIJ and close the Courthouse TSI program and well as finding internal saving of \$200,000 after another year of constraint in Fiscal Year 2012. We believe taking any jail beds out of the system will put the community at risk and be detrimental to the entire public safety system and partners.

As you know, after extensive research by the Sheriff's Office and other agencies that makes up the County's public safety system, 1310 jails beds is the minimum number of beds to keep the public safety system functioning safely and efficiently. The closing of one dorm would reduce the number of jail beds to 1251.

With jail beds at the 1310 level, last weekend due to capacity restraints, there were 11 forced releases. While we know that jail capacity is tested more in the summer months, reducing jail beds below this level puts a strain on the entire public safety system. It also poses a public safety concern due to the type of individual the Sheriff might be forced to release. Due to Oregon sentencing laws individuals who have committed more serious crimes may be released.

It isn't hard to calculate that closing the TSI program will ultimately increase the demand for jail beds. Numbers show that the TSI program averages over 4,000 bed days per year. We have commented before that this program provides a money-saving sentencing alternative to parole or probation. The Sheriff's Office has no control over sentencing, but is responsible for effectively managing the individuals in the system. The Turn Self In Program makes good business sense, as it reduces costs associated with booking and release, and jail beds. Additionally, this program allows those who are employed to maintain employment. As Judge Maurer said, when individuals lose their job and ultimately their housing, the downstream effect is profound.

Everyone understands that tough decisions have to be made and that those decisions will affect good programs and services. However we believe that cutting jail beds and the TSI program will put public safety and the public safety system at risk. We hope you will support the Chair's proposal to utilize ongoing contingency funding to mitigate the state reduction of these core services. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully, The Sheriff's Office CBAC

Ethan Atkinson  
Julie Cieloha  
Ray Davenport  
Judith Harris-Kobin  
Jim Lasher  
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