

1/31/17 Public
Comment

The Right Reverend Michael Hanley
Bishop

Diocese of Oregon



**Commission on Jail and Prison Ministry
The Rev. Thomas R. English, Chair**

January 31, 2017

**Before the Lane County Board of Commissioners in support of referral of renewal
of the current Jail/Youth Services to the May 16, 2017 ballot**

Good afternoon, for the record, I am the Rev. Thomas R. English and I reside at 2530 Fairmount Blvd. in Eugene.

Honorable Commission Chair, Pat Farr and members of the Commission, I am here in support of Sheriff Trapp's petition to refer a measure to the May 16, 2017 for the renewal of the current Jail/Youth Services Levy. I am a semi-retired criminal justice professional having spent over 35 years as a consultant for the U.S. Department of Justice assisting jurisdictions throughout the county to adopt and implement practices supported by what has become a sturdy and robust body of research on what works in crime prevention and corrections¹. I received a Masters degree in Corrections from the University of Oregon in 1972. For the last eighteen years I have served as a volunteer chaplain at the Lane County Jail and for a shorter period as a regional chaplain for the Oregon Department of Corrections. For the past several years I have served as a board member and now immediate-past-board chair of Sponsors Inc., a community-based re-entry program in Eugene. But most importantly and to the point, I have been honored to serve as a citizen member of the Lane County Public Safety Coordinating Council for several years where I have worked with an outstanding group of public safety professionals, including the Sheriff, who have wrestled with decreasing budgets to keep Lane County a safe place to work and live. While these experiences have greatly contributed to my ability to analyze and understand public safety policy issues, my comments today reflect also the criminal justice philosophy of the Episcopal Diocese of Oregon's Commission on Jail and Prison Ministries and, I believe the philosophy of the faith community in Oregon. That philosophy calls on all of us, citizens, elected officials and criminal justice professionals to continually work toward a fair, effective and humane criminal justice system.

Sheriff Trapp has already outlined the many benefits of the Levy and the County's fidelity to the voters, but I'd like to expand on and re-enforce on just a little a couple of them.

- Mental Health. Our Jail, unfortunately, is the largest mental health facility in the county. As Sheriff Trapp points out, the inmate population with mental health issues has doubled to 60%. With the support of the levy, Adult Correction has been able to increase mental health services for our inmates and by reaching out to community providers like Lane County Behavioral Health actually provide the treatment these individuals need to change the behaviors that brought to the jail in the first place.
- Secondly, Lane County Adult Corrections has been able to recruit a high quality cohort of mostly younger deputies at considerable expense. These fine officers have families and need the assurance of continued employment if we are to retain them. And corrections needs to retain in order to provide the level of service our citizens expect.
- Finally, critics of the criminal justice in general and me among them deplore the over reliance on incarceration in our state and country. Let me assure you that because of the close working relationships corrections has with the courts, district attorney and parole and probation. Lane County Adult Corrections is committed to releasing as many pre-trial defendants consistent with public safety, s possible. Several years ago a research-based tool was developed to increase the objectivity and safety of release decisions. This risk assessment tool continues to be refined and validated over the years.

Thank you for the opportunity to talk with you today about this critical issue. I would be happy to respond to any questions you might have.

¹ See *Implementing Evidence-Based Principles in Community Corrections: Collaboration for Systemic Change in the Criminal Justice System*. U.S. Department of Justice. National Institute of Corrections.