

**Community Justice Centers
FY 2025 Budget Request
House and Senate Appropriations Committee Testimony - February 20, 2024**

My name is Rachel Jolly and I lead the Burlington Community Justice Center. Given the growing interest in relying on restorative justice programs to help alleviate court, prosecutor, and defense caseload backlogs, the almost two dozen, state-funded restorative justice centers have growing budget needs for FY 2025.

DCF - Balanced and Restorative Justice (BARJ)

DCF currently supports 12 providers in offering restorative programming for court adjudicated youth or those at risk of being so. This program has been level-funded for many, many years. For the past two years, the Legislature appropriated \$250,000 (designated as a base funding increase last year). We ask that that appropriation continue in FY 2025.

Attorney General's Office – Court Diversion Programs

The Governor's budget includes 3% increase in the AGO Court Diversion budget (totaling about \$3M) and the AGO has also requested approximately \$300K additional to support four centers whose caseloads have been especially high and who need to increase capacity to meet that demand. We fully support that request.

Department of Corrections – Community Justice Grants

There are 17 centers which provide restorative justice services funded by the Department of Corrections, which include restorative justice approaches for community disputes, pre-charge and post-charge cases, post-adjudication (i.e., probation), and post-incarceration (i.e., re-entry support). CJs received a total of \$3,547,311 in grants from DOC in FY 2024.

Funding for the CJs through DOC currently resides in Sec. B.338.1 of the budget (entitled Justice Reinvestment). Despite the title of this section, only a very small percentage of these funds are for Justice Reinvestment. The majority of the funds in this section support transitional housing and CJs. We are focusing on CJC grants at this time, and we request the following:

- ***Three separate budget sections*** for restorative justice services/programming, transitional housing funding, and Justice Reinvestment funding. This will more accurately reflect the purpose of the sections, as well as create greater transparency in the budget.
- **\$3,902,000** for Community Justice Center grants in the DOC budget
 - This includes a 10% increase over our FY 2024 DOC grants to address COLA increases and increased operating costs

My strong request is that the Legislature consider placing specific line items for the programs/services they want to support in all three of the above primary funders budgets.

Thank you for your time and attention.