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To All Interested Parties:

Today in Oregon a lively debate is underway regarding the effectiveness of our juvenile justice practices and policies. Although Oregon has patterned itself as a leader in effective juvenile justice reform, statistics reveal that our state has one of the worst juvenile crime rates in the nation. This has been the subject of a recent report produced by the Clackamas County District Attorney's Office (<http://www.clackamas.us/da/documents/JuvenileJusticeinOregon20140929.pdf>), which has served as the basis for legislative proposals and task force investigations around the state.

In the course of that debate, our office engaged the Hatfield School of Government at Portland State University to run a statistical analysis of the correlation between Oregon juvenile justice practices and juvenile results, such as crime rates, in this state. This statistical analysis is now complete and is attached.

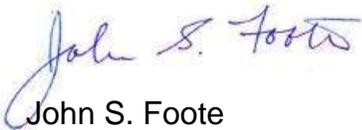
Surprisingly, although juvenile justice reformers have long claimed that the reform policies they advocate actually reduce juvenile criminality, PSU researchers discovered that few statistical correlation studies had been conducted across the nation to determine if reform policies actually correlate with better juvenile delinquency results, such as arrest rates. No such studies exist in Oregon. The PSU study, although limited to Oregon counties, is apparently the first attempt to do so in this state.

Some of the study's key findings regarding statistically significant relationships between system policies and juvenile justice results can be summarized as follows:

- The study demonstrates that greater use of the formal court system correlates at a statistically significant level with lower juvenile crime rates in the community. In short, counties that make more extensive use of the formal court process for youth accused of criminal behavior experience lower juvenile crime rates at a level that is statistically significant.

- The study demonstrates that lower use of juvenile justice system intervention, either formally through the court system or with informal supervision correlates with higher juvenile crime rates. In short, counties where juvenile authorities choose to intervene less in delinquent conduct tend to experience higher juvenile crime rates at a level that is statistically significant.
- The study also demonstrates that the use of post-adjudication detention actually correlates with higher juvenile crime rates. In short, counties with higher rates of detaining juveniles in county facilities after adjudication tend to experience higher juvenile crime rates at a level that is statistically significant.

We believe these findings are significant, although it needs to be stressed that the study only expresses a statistical correlation. It does not purport to demonstrate a cause and effect relationship. Nonetheless, we believe the study constitutes a valuable starting point for discussions about our juvenile justice system.



John S. Foote



Chuck French

Enclosure(s)

cc Task Force Members