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To whom it may concern,

On behalf of the Board of Directors of the Central Oregon Veterans Council (COVC), I am honored to write a letter advocating for The Shield and the work they do to support our community. Over the past year, we have worked closely with The Shield and their founder, Dan Anderson, on their endeavors to support veterans and first responders with mental health support and counseling. Dan regularly attends our COVC meetings, where we collaborate with one another to determine the best possible approach to supporting our community, together.

Dan and his team with The Shield are extremely passionate and adept at what they do, and more than ever their services are needed in our community. Central Oregon has a very high veteran population, which only continues to grow, and VA services simply cannot support the needs. We witnessed a significant increase in population over the past year due to many fleeing their cities amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. With this growth, we must ensure that our first responders and veterans still serving their communities have access to not only affordable healthcare, but also affordable and proven mental health support.

We have no doubt that The Shield will continue to be a beacon of light in our community, during both challenging times as well as vibrant ones, because the experiences our veterans and first responders have gone through can sometimes leave lasting scars that need to be deeply dealt with. Dan and his team are prepared for that and have made a positive name for themselves in our community. We are proud to be their partner and advocate, and we know that they will continue to support some of the most vital members of our community as they work to keep Central Oregonians safe. We urge you to consider The Shield for this grant, as we know the financial assistance will serve so many throughout our entire community.

Regards,

*Wendy Rudy*

Board of Directors

Central Oregon Veterans Council

*Central Oregon Veterans Council is a 501(c)(3). A local coalition of dedicated Veteran Organizations who connect, collaborate, unite and advocate on behalf of all Central Oregon Veterans, Guard and Reserve personnel in order to increase support for prominent issues facing this population.*