



To: **Members of the House Judiciary Committee**

From: Lauren Holland,
Oregon Circuit Court Judges Association

Date: January 22nd, 2019

Re: **Support for HB 2238**
Modifies annual salaries of justices of Supreme Court and
Judges of Court of Appeals, Oregon Tax Court and Circuit Courts.

Chair Williamson, Vice-Chair Gorsek, Vice-Chair Sprenger, Members of the House Judiciary Committee:

My name is Lauren Holland. I have the privilege of serving as a Circuit Court Judge in Lane County, the Second Judicial District of Oregon. I am also the President of the Oregon Circuit Court Judges Association. I am here on behalf of the Circuit Court Judges to support the passage of House Bill 2238 which relates to Judicial Compensation.

Thank you for your support of the Judiciary. Your steadfast support and investment in our justice system and our judges strengthens public confidence in the integrity of the courts.

Chief Justice Walters has spoken with you about the structural imbalance in the courtroom and written materials have been submitted which include graphs (for those, like me, who are visual learners) that demonstrate the imbalance and how essential it is to correct this disparity in order to attract and retain talented, experienced, and knowledgeable judges. Current comparisons to compensation of judges both nationally and to the Western States have Oregon judges ranked 46th nationally (adjusted for Cost-of-Living Index) and 12th of 13 (adjusted for Cost-of-Living Index) despite this Committee's past efforts and past successes.

I am also respectful and mindful of the conditions under which we approach you to request an increase for judicial compensation. There are many needs...for the people in our state.

Those needs, those issues that face Oregonians, that are critical to their families, their businesses, their property, come before the Court. The judicial system is here to serve every Oregonian. And Oregonians need to know, should know, that they will be heard and their disputes decided by accomplished, learned, equitable judges. We sit on a court of general jurisdiction which means we hear all criminal and civil cases: disputes concerning the custody of

children- which parent should be awarded custody; whether children should be removed from their parents by the state and parental rights terminated; disputes between neighbors regarding their property boundary lines; disputes with contractors (and subcontractors) about homes and business buildings. Every person who enters the courthouse deserves to know and trust that their dispute will be heard, understood and decided by the most knowledgeable among us; that even if the decision doesn't go their way, they know that this is the right place to return to the next time they have an unresolvable dispute.

Judges make difficult decisions every day that impact people's lives. Families with disputes about their aging parents – which adult child will make decisions for these vulnerable Oregonians while they retain their autonomy and dignity with the least restrictions in place; self-represented litigants trying to navigate their way through a domestic relations case; the person with the mental health diagnoses who has been found not fit to proceed in her low level criminal trespass case who is released from jail to the street and two days later taken to the emergency room of the local hospital and is now the subject of a guardianship proceeding (which I heard at the hospital).

Oregonians deserve the best legal minds, the most experienced and diverse judges to hear and decide their cases. Judges who are prepared and on call 24/7 to decide if probable cause is established to issue a search warrant of someone's home, car, telephone, computer, or person; judges who are required to go to the jail each weekend to determine if there is sufficient evidence to hold a person in custody pending their first appearance before a judge at arraignments; judges who are available to travel for emergency guardianship hearings to hospitals, memory facilities and nursing homes. Judges who preside over treatment courts using evidence based best practices to reduce recidivism and to connect people to local resources to promote safe, community centered treatment, successful recovery and family reintegration.

Judges are the face of justice in small claims cases, where the number of cases grow and the issues grow more complex each year. Judges manage jury trials; we are the gatekeepers for evidence and work with jurors who rely on us to conduct efficient trials that do not waste their time and allows them to make their important decisions.

Oregonians benefit from having judges on the bench with a breadth of experience and sustained passion for the law. We all benefit from having a diverse bench who are capable of handling these critical issues and to mentor newer members of the bench. It takes expertise and wisdom to assist in the resolution of cases as diverse as commercial court cases, domestic relations cases and juvenile court dependency and delinquency cases prior to trial. It takes leadership, excellent judicial temperament and patience to preside over cases pertaining to some of the most vulnerable members of our community. You know the impact these decisions have on people's lives. Judges make these decisions with great thought, seriousness and a thorough knowledge of the law. We all want to attract our outstanding attorneys to serve on our courts.

Passing House Bill 2238 will be another great step to ensure our judicial system serves all Oregonians well. Thank you for your support. Thank you for hearing my remarks on behalf of the Oregon Circuit Court Judges. I am available for any questions you may have.

Respectfully submitted,

Hon. Lauren S. Holland