

Citizens' Campaign for Court Funding

April 3, 2019

Dear Co-Chairs Winters and Piluso and members of the committee,

I am writing in support of SB 5513 as a member of the Citizen's Campaign for Court Funding, a group of a business and nonprofit leaders as well as Oregon State Bar leaders who are concerned about the continued under-funding of the courts.

The last few biennia have seen decreases in court service levels that have called into question whether the courts can uphold their constitutional duty to administer justice completely and without delay. Even now, courts have limited their customer service hours. While the number of judges increased due to the legislature's efforts, and the courts have successfully implemented Oregon eCourt, the clerks and support staff they depend on to make the courts work effectively have been cut substantially.

Courts offer safety for the public by resolving criminal cases, certainty for businesses and organizations in disputes with customers, competitors and the government, and resolution to families in crisis. Our constitution and statutes rightly require courts to deal with certain kinds of cases like criminal matters and many juvenile cases before others. Lower priority cases – such as civil disputes – fall to the back and move forward only as permitted by resolution of the cases at the front of the line.

The Oregon State Bar is committed to engaging with the legislature and the governor in a conversation about the third branch, which has little control over the amount of its budget. We hope for a constructive dialog. We realize that all parts of our state government have to pull together to support education, public safety, and healthcare, but we are convinced that adequate funding for basic court services is a critically important component of that process.

We look forward to talking with you soon about these important issues.

Sincerely,



Christine R. Costantino, OSB President

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