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April 3, 2019

Joint Committee on Ways & Means  
Subcommittee on Public Safety  
VIA EMAIL

Dear Senator Winters & Representative Piluso,

On behalf of Classroom Law Project, and with the support of our Board of Directors, I am writing to strongly urge you to support adequate funding for the Oregon Judicial Department to ensure that all Oregonians have access to a judicial system that truly provides them with recourse through fair, timely and efficient resolution of disputes.

As you know, the mission of Classroom Law Project is to prepare Oregon students to become active, engaged, and informed participants in our democratic society. This purpose is driven by our deeply-held belief that the effective functioning of each of our institutions and branches of government is critical to ensure a free and just society that protects the rights of all citizens, and provides equitable opportunities for them to pursue their aspirations for themselves and their families.

However, at the same time that we are striving to instill in our young people an understanding of, respect for, and commitment to our system of government, the Oregon court system has become underfunded to a point that it has put into question our own commitment to open and equitable access to justice for all. As our population has continued to grow, OJD resources have declined. The resulting reductions in staffing, limitations on the hours in which court services are available, and delays in resolution of critical issues for families and businesses means that we are not, in fact, fulfilling our constitutional responsibility to provide justice completely and without delay to all who need it.

We support Chief Justice Walters' budget recommendations that will allow for full access to timely and responsive court services for all Oregonians who seek them, and that will ensure safe and secure court facilities, with adequate and appropriately-compensated staffing. While recognizing that you face many tough choices and difficult funding tradeoffs during the 2019 session, I ask that you ensure the adequate funding of this critical function of government and core democratic institution.

Sincerely,

Erin Esparza  
Executive Director

cc: Senator Ginny Burdick  
Representative Jennifer Williamson

*Classroom Law Project is a non-profit organization of individuals, educators, lawyers and civic leaders building strong communities by teaching students to become active citizens.*

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