



April 14, 2021

Re: [HB 5012](#) (Oregon Judicial Department budget bill)

Dear Co-Chair Gorsek, Co-Chair Sollman, and members of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means, Public Safety Subcommittee:

Resourcing our Oregon judicial branch at current service level funding is critical to ensuring that all Oregonians have access to justice and fair proceedings. Well-resourced courts are essential to serving vulnerable Oregonians who find themselves caught up in the legal system. Oregon's public defenders know that the majority of their clients – adults in criminal proceedings, youth in delinquency proceedings, and children and families in foster care proceedings – have lived through instability, trauma, discrimination or other institutional disparities, behavioral health conditions or inadequate health care, or any number of other challenges that make navigating a complicated legal system all the more overwhelming.

Adequate funding for our circuit courts allows judges and staff more time and resources to see our clients as individuals and to provide responsive services, supports, and accountability outside of incarceration, fines, and other burdensome measures. Programs such as family treatment courts and pretrial release staffing give public defense clients more opportunities to access services and minimize harmful disruptions to their families, housing, employment, and overall well-being.

Adequate funding for our appellate courts allows judges and staff to thoroughly review the cases before them, consider the myriad angles of the arguments presented, and shape Oregon law in the most thoughtful approach possible.

Adequate funding for our Oregon Judicial Department agency allows our Oregon courts to function efficiently, remove institutional barriers to access (such virtual court appearances during pandemics), improve data collection and tracking opportunities so that we can identify what works and address problems and disparities, and continually strive towards more innovative ways to serve Oregonians across the state. Simply put, a well-resourced judiciary makes Oregon work better for everyone.

Sincerely,

Bridget Budbill

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