



April 14, 2021

Joint Committee on Ways and Means
Subcommittee on Public Safety
900 Court Street NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

RE: Need for Circuit Court Judges in Deschutes County

Dear Co-Chairs Gorsek and Sollman and Members of the Committee:

As you prepare to appropriate funding for the Judicial Department, we respectfully ask that you consider including funding for two judicial positions in Deschutes County.

As you know, the Deschutes County Circuit Court is one of the most under-resourced courts in the state in terms of both judges and staff. For the past decade, we have been the fastest-growing county in the state. Our population has increased by more than 57% since our last judge was added in 2003.

In 2015, the Oregon Judicial Department estimated that Deschutes County was 2.6 judges below the number of judges actually needed to address case filings in a timely manner. Currently, our Court faces an almost nine-month delay in scheduling criminal trials. This is increasingly creating a risk to public safety as cases, primarily DUI's, approach statutory deadlines for trial and are in danger of being dismissed. It is also not uncommon for civil jury trials to be delayed three years or more from the date of incident.

With new Circuit Court judges, the 11th Judicial District will not only be able to reduce delays in scheduling trials, but will also be able to improve outcomes and meet time standards in juvenile dependency cases and increase the amount of judge time available to hear contested shelter care hearings and termination trials.

As you may know, we have routinely committed financial resources to help supplement the needs of our local court and are prepared to fund our full courthouse expansion, if necessary. We believe that we are the only county in the State prepared to make this type of investment.

Please help us to meet our growing need and fund two needed judicial positions in Deschutes County. We're happy to provide additional information or answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

The Deschutes County Board of Commissioners

Tony DeBone, Chair

Phil Chang, Vice-Chair

Patti Adair, Commissioner