



April 28, 2021

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 5028**

**District Attorneys and Their Deputies**

Dear Chair Gorsek, Co-Chair Sollman, Senators Hansell and Prozanski, and Representatives Grayber, Kropf, Leif, and Stark,

Thank you for the opportunity to briefly testify about the District Attorney (DA) budget. AOC strongly supports the budget requests of the DA's, one of our key partners in the delivery of core public safety services for all Oregonians. Here are a few points that Counties would ask this Subcommittee to consider:

- The State and Counties have numerous [partnerships](#) in the delivery of core public services. DA services are a State function with no mandate on Counties. Historically, DA services were entirely paid for by the State. But last century the legislature sought help. Counties stepped up. But then the partnership began to slip. By 1975, Counties were paying for 81% of the partnership.
- In 1997, the Legislature ordered the Attorney General (AG) to study the issue and report back. The report from the AG indicated that the State had harmed public safety and needed to restore a balance of funding for the partnership. That did not happen. By 2000, Counties were paying for 91% of DA services, a State function.
- Another study was completed by a task force chaired by Representative Nancy Nathanson, reaching a similar conclusion to the AG. It also went unheeded. AOC has raised this issue before during similar budget hearings, requesting that the legislature reverse this unfortunate trend. Those requests also went unheeded. Currently, Counties pay for 96% of DA services. The State no longer even contributes to the cost of Deputy District Attorneys or witness fees in its own criminal cases, and no longer even fully funds the salary for its own state elected officials.
- To provide a rough idea of how out of proportion this "partnership" has become: Basic core DA services currently cost around \$320 million per biennium statewide. Counties currently pay for just over \$306 million of that – for a State function with no mandate on Counties at all.
- To add insult to injury, this year Counties had to fight off House Bill 2177, which would have effectively taxed Counties for the privilege of picking up 96% of the State's tab for DA services.
- Counties believe that the State ought to begin the process of restoring this partnership by showing that the State desires to achieve a healthy balance of shared funding. Counties believe that 50/50 ought to be the initial target, although we understand it may take some time to achieve that, since we are talking about \$320 million per biennium. In short, Counties are weary of being short changed. Please begin the process of fixing this partnership.

In short, AOC strongly encourages this Subcommittee to fully fund the budget requests made by the DAs, a key public safety partner, and also begin the process of restoring this important partnership.

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