



May 6, 2021

Chair Prozanski, Vice-Chair Thatcher, and members of the committee,

Thank you for providing the opportunity to share the Oregon Defense Consortia Association's support of HB 2003. The Oregon Defense Consortia Association includes public defense providers who work with consortia in Baker, Clackamas, Clatsop, Coos, Crook, Deschutes, Jefferson, Jackson, Linn, Marion, Multnomah, Polk, Union, Wallowa, and Washington counties. Our members are committed to public defense work and support efforts to improve our public defense system.

Our members are committed to upholding indigent defendants' constitutional right to access high-quality defense services. It's no secret that Oregon's public defense system and the people it serves would benefit from modernization. Untenable case rates, lack of support for connection to services for defendants and more are leading to turnover in the provider community, and when our system fails in these ways, the most vulnerable members in our community pay the price.

We have been working with our partners at OPDS, OCDLA and AFSCME to build off the efforts started in collaboration with the Speaker during the 2020 short session. We appreciated the opportunity to collaborate on a bill that will establish a community-based, stakeholder-driven framework for helping build the foundation of a new public defense system.

ODCA is grateful for the inclusion of provisions that direct the Public Defense Services Commission (PDSC) to adopt policies that ensure compensation and caseloads are in accordance with national and regional best practices, which we hope will bring some long-term stability and certainty to our providers who have long worked with high caseloads, a lack of resources, and low pay. We also appreciate the provision which directs the PDSC to consider the different regional and structural needs of providers in its contracting policies. Finally, we support the direction to the PDSC to establish systems with transparency and stakeholder engagement, as this will be a crucial part of the modernization effort moving forward.

We recognize that HB 2003 is a first step in the modernization of the public defense system in Oregon. As we worked with our partners last session in support of these changes, it led to discussions about what next steps would look like. A stakeholder process was identified, but unfortunately, due to the pandemic, it never materialized. We appreciate that OPDS is taking up this effort and is launching a robust stakeholder engagement process on public defense modernization and look forward to participating in this process.

We are grateful to the legislature for helping improve the public defense system for our providers, investigators, staff, and most importantly, our clients. We urge you to pass HB 2003 and lay this



important foundation for reform, and we look forward to continuing the conversation and participating in the modernization effort through the interim and the next legislative sessions.

Oregon Defense Consortia Association

Sincerely,

Rob Harris
Cierra Brown
Bruce Liebowitz
Jon Pritchard
Bruce Tarbox
Jon Weiner