

**PUBLIC DEFENDER SERVICES OF LANE COUNTY, INC.**  
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May 10, 2021

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**Testimony of Brook Reinhard in Support of HB 5030**

Dear Co-chairs Gorsek and Sollman, and members of the Committee,

My name is Brook Reinhard. I am the executive director of Public Defender Services of Lane County, a non-profit that serves roughly 5,000 people each year in Lane County who are charged with crimes or are otherwise involved with the justice system or at risk of the loss of their constitutional liberties.

I am writing to urge your strong support of HB 5030 and PDSC's current service level for the 2021-2023 budget. Simply put, investing in public defense promotes public safety and gives Oregonians the best opportunity to avoid unjust incarceration and loss of liberty.

In 2018, the Sixth Amendment Center completed its comprehensive report on Oregon's public defense system, calling for an overhaul in the way Oregon funds, administers and implements public defense in the state. Since that time, the commission has completely revamped its contract structure, but more robust funding is needed to actually implement the long-overdue changes.

The legislature has wisely invested in lower caseloads and comprehensive services on juvenile dependency cases through the Parent Child Representation Project. Similar funding should be provided for adult criminal cases so that we can start focusing on reducing recidivism through wrap-around services and holistic defense.

The Oregon legislature paid for a comprehensive time tracking study conducted by the American Bar Association that should be released later this year. I have participated extensively in this study, and preliminary data suggest that the caseloads modeled by the agency are likely at least twice as high as the levels needed to provide constitutionally effective representation, particularly on misdemeanor cases, which represented 38 percent of PDSC's budget in 2020.

Oregon's investment now to support PDSC will help retain quality lawyers and reduce caseloads so that lawyers can actually spend the time they need to fully represent clients. Regardless of the accusations someone is facing, having a lawyer who takes the time to listen to them, fully investigate their case and start providing them with the help needed to make changes in their life is critical. I am a public defender because I have seen first-hand how client-centered representation can make our community a better place.

Thank you for your support of public defense in Oregon.

Sincerely,  
*Brook Reinhard*  
Brook Reinhard  
Executive Director, Public Defender Services of Lane County