



May 10, 2021

Dear Co-Chairs Gorsek & Sollman and Members of the Subcommittee,

My name is Elizabeth Wakefield. I am a staff attorney with Metropolitan Public Defender in the Multnomah County office and a proud member of AFSCME Local 3668. I am testifying in support of HB 5030 and a fully funded public defense system.

I have been a public defender for 20 years with all but 16 months dedicated to direct representation of clients. In my practice, I have represented clients in misdemeanors, felonies & civil commitments, in community court and drug treatment courts, and in Multnomah County mental health & aid and assist courts. I currently work in our Parent Child Representation (PCRCP) unit. I represent parents and children involved in child welfare and juveniles in the juvenile justice system. Today, I am providing testimony to highlight the continued need to modernize and adequately fund Oregon's trial level public defense services by making the \$20 million investment called for in the Governor's Recommended Budget.

Multnomah County is included in the Parent Child Representation Program (PCRCP). The PCRCP provides for a holistic/interdisciplinary approach to public defense services that include Case Managers to support clients and help them succeed, caseload caps for attorneys, oversight through attorney activity logs, better pay for the attorneys and staff, and additional training and technical assistance for attorneys. This program has demonstrated success and should be used as a model that is applied to all of Oregon's public defense services and not just our work to keep families together.

With interdisciplinary/holistic support through the defense team, my clients are better able to access treatment, school, and housing options. They have been able to repair supportive relationships. The defense team (the attorney, legal assistant, case manager, and investigator) brings a network of support to each case. Our clients feel supported through the process which leads to better engagement and better outcomes.

Some examples of positive outcomes with Case Manager support:

- A parent who is a member of our BIPOC community felt supported with her case manager to ask for culturally appropriate services from DHS. When the case was finally closed, the parent explained to me that without the support of her Case Manager, she would not have found the strength to ask for culturally appropriate services. He strongly supported her in expressing her feelings and she was able to ask for what her family needed to succeed. Her family was successfully reunited.



- A family who was able to remain together because of the family defense team's ability to coordinate information and to quickly locate a treatment bed for the parent in the middle of the COVID-19 lockdown. Children remained with their mother throughout her time in treatment, moved to transitional housing reuniting with the other parent, and finally located stable permanent housing without the children ever being placed in foster care.
- A parent client who re-entered our community from prison in the middle of the COVID-19 global pandemic was able to access his services. He has successfully reunited with his son.
- A parent client who determined that it was better for the child to remain in the care of the relative foster placement worked with the Case Manager and Attorney closely before deciding to agree that guardianship was the best outcome for the child.
- A parent client with an intellectual disability who was ignored and overlooked by the caseworker found a path to family reunification. The Case Manager provided client support and assisted the parent in communicating with the DHS. The Case Manager found creative ways to assist the parent in demonstrating growth and progress in therapeutic services. The children were returned, stabilized, were able to be taken off prescription medication, and continue to benefit from appropriate community supports.
- A parent with disabilities who is caring for a child with disabilities has benefitted from having a trusted Case Manager. Recently, a crisis arose related to rent assistance. The Case Manager aided the parent in communicating with the Homeforward case manager and was able to help the parent resolve the situation. The parent wept tears of gratitude when the situation was resolved.

At MPD, practicing in the PCRCP unit, I am extremely grateful that the PCRCP has come to Multnomah County. PCRCP 'Case Manager Component is the strongest component that allows better support for my clients. The Case Managers have the time to build relationships with the clients. The Case Managers are able to aid the attorneys in understanding what services and supports will best be able to help the client. Case Managers help prepare parents for going into inpatient treatment and with building positive relationships with the other professionals assisting the family. Case Managers help client's express their strengths and needs so that the Attorney can advocate for the best outcome.

With interdisciplinary holistic defense, my clients are better able to access treatment, school, and housing options. My clients feel supported through the process which leads to better engagement and better outcomes. My clients have learned how to advocate for themselves, be



successful in treatment, and in receiving family support services. All of which benefit my client, their family and our community.

I have to give a shout out to MPD's Community Law Division (CLD). The CLD has worked miracles for some of my clients. They are funded through several grants. Where the goal is to provide our clients the ability to move forward without further adverse court involvement, CLD's work is essential. CLD attorneys have assisted my client's with expungements of past evictions and expungements of past criminal convictions. When my clients are seeking apartments and get denied, CLD has assisted in appealing the denial of housing.

- CLD recently helped my client escaping domestic violence with negotiating past damage (due to the domestic violence), with appealing a denial, and with move in costs for a new apartment. My client's family of 6 is now in a new location, unknown to the abuser, and able to move forward and heal in a positive situation.
- CLD helped clients: expunge the past evictions, expunge past criminal convictions, appeal denial when seeking housing, assist client to maintain housing while accessing in patient treatment, assisted with FAPA restraining orders, consulted about child support, and assisted with Immigration issues.

This level of representation and connection to service and supports are worthwhile investments that should be provided to all accused of a crime in Oregon. I look forward to working with my local, the legislature, our partners and PDSC to build on the investments you make to build this modernize system. Please invest the \$20 million the Governor called for in her Recommended Budget for Trial Level Services.

In Unity,

Elizabeth Wakefield
Attorney
Member, Local 3668 Metropolitan Public Defender