

**TESTIMONY ON HB 2178
REDUCING TAX COURT FEES
BEFORE THE HOUSE JUDICIARY CIVIL LAW SUBCOMMITTEE
FEBRUARY 1, 2021**

**PRESENTED BY: ERIN M. PETTIGREW, ACCESS TO JUSTICE COUNSEL FOR
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Hon. Chair Power, Vice-Chair Wallan, Members of the Committee, my name is Erin M. Pettigrew, Access to Justice Counsel at the Oregon Judicial Department (OJD). I am here to testify in support of HB 2178, a bill brought before you at the request of Chief Justice Walters and OJD. Thank you for the opportunity.

This bill is driven by our goal to increase access to justice. Specifically, examining how we impose fines and fees, while focusing our inquiry on equity and fairness.

The branch is currently in the middle of a two-year Strategic Campaign designed to make critical improvements in the justice system, renewing our commitment to Oregonians and others who use our courts. This includes our pledge to examine the impacts of fines and fees, develop best practices for their imposition, and to take affirmative steps to ensure that they do not create unnecessary barriers or disproportionate outcomes. We also hope that our work in this area will increase public trust and confidence in government, and faith in our justice system.

HB 2178 furthers that initiative by reducing the filing fee in the Magistrate Division of the Tax Court, which will allow more taxpayers to have their cases heard and decided. Presiding Judge Manicke of the Oregon Tax Court is here with me today to introduce the Court and provide specifics regarding HB 2178.

In the bill materials you will find our bill summary (one-pager) as well as a self-help guide – the “Purple Book” - designed for litigants navigating the Tax Court system, which Judge Manicke will speak to further.

Thank you for your consideration of this important initiative. We welcome any questions about the bill, or any questions you may have regarding fines and fees fairness in our court system generally.