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DATE: February 01, 2022

TO: Representative Janelle Bynum, Chair of the House Judiciary Committee

FROM: Kimberly McCullough, Legislative Director
Oregon Department of Justice

SUBJECT: HB 4120 OJD fines/fees, remote proceedings

The Oregon Department of Justice urges your support of HB 4120, which reduces barriers to Oregonians seeking access to justice and improves our judicial processes.

In particular, we strongly support provisions in this bill which provide the Chief Justice with ongoing authority to direct or permit remote appearances in any court proceeding where warranted, regardless of whether there is a currently declared state of emergency.

OJD has done incredible work to keep our state courts open during the COVID-19 pandemic. Crucial to this has been the Chief Justice's authority to permit alternative modes of proceedings and virtual appearances. This process has taught us that remote proceedings are not only a viable option for many types of cases and hearings, but that they are often the best choice for individuals who have difficulty accessing justice. The Department of Justice's own attorneys regularly appear in our state courts, and they too have benefited from the increased flexibility and accessibility of Oregon courts allowing remote proceedings.

Our experiences during this pandemic have shown us that there are different, and sometimes better, ways of doing things. HB 4120 provides us with the opportunity to continue reap the benefits of this learning by allowing for remote appearances in appropriate court proceedings long after this pandemic ends.

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