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RE: Legislation Addressing Organized Retail Crime: SB 318 and SB 340

Chair Prozanski, Vice-Chair Thatcher, and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee:

Please accept this written testimony in support of two important bills that address organized retail crime in Oregon—SB 318 and SB 340.

As District Attorney for Washington County, I am keenly aware of the challenges our community faces from increased organized retail crime. These crimes impact all members of our community, including both large and small businesses and employees and customers alike. As the nature and scope of these crimes evolve, it is important that our laws also evolve to keep pace.

For the past six months I have worked with members of the Organized Retail Crime Task Force to identify funding and policy solutions and I believe SB 318 and SB 340 represent both.

SB 318 contains two key funding components. First, it will fund additional resources at the Oregon Department of Justice (DOJ) which will allow enhanced communication and coordination between DOJ and local investigators and prosecutors. Second, SB 318 creates a local grant program, administered through the Criminal Justice Commission, which will allow local law enforcement to obtain needed resources to engage in enforcement actions. Both important funding recommendations will send a strong message to the community that organized retail theft is unacceptable.

SB 340 contains important policy components that address gaps in the law. These include:

- Adding Organized Retail Theft statute to the repeat property offender statute;
- Amending the Organized Retail Theft statute so that it has the same time period for stolen property value aggregation as regular felony theft;
- Amending the value of stolen property statute to remove barriers to prosecuting organized retail theft;
- Amending the venue statutes to reflect the reality of cross-county crime; and,

- Amending the theft statute to make it a felony for those who engage in conduct that endangers the safety of others during a theft.

With the passage of both SB 318 and SB 340 I believe Oregon will be well-positioned to make significant progress to deter organized retail crime ensure safe communities.

Thank you,



Kevin Barton
District Attorney for Washington County