



March 9, 2023

Co-Chairs Senator Janeen Sollman and Representative Paul Evans  
Members of the Ways and Means Joint Subcommittee on Public Safety

VIA OLIS

Re: Oregon Judicial Department Proposed Budget (SB 5512)

Co-Chairs Sollman and Evans, Members of the Committee:

Washington County is the second largest county in the state of Oregon, with over 600,000 people residing within the County. Since 1990, the county's population has nearly doubled in size, most recently our population has grown at a rate equivalent to 19 people moving in every day. This growth has made us one of the most rapidly growing and most diverse county in the state. To meet the justice needs of this growing population, we need a high functioning justice system. We have worked to partner with the Oregon Judicial Department to help them address the backlog of court cases by partnering through the Wingspan Program and other means of finding space for the court to function in. However the OJD budget covers more than just our court needs.

First, the OJD budget provides represents a long needed increase in the budgets for our law library and our conciliation services which serve community members that need assistance in challenging times. Our law library provides services to those that need access to legal materials which can be expensive and challenging to navigate. Conciliation services provide assistance to families in the most challenging circumstances – child custody negotiations during a divorce. The county has worked to maintain these functions over time, but the continuing service levels funding will not continue service levels.

Second, the budget includes funding for additional judges for Washington County in POP 108. These new judicial seats are vital to increasing the access to justice that our community needs. Over the last few years, analysis has shown that the number of judges is far below the size of bench needed for a county of over 600,000 in population. The attached flyer from 2021 shows just how behind Washington County's courthouse staffing levels are. In the intervening 2 years, the situation has only further exacerbated the needs. Our board and staff are already working to find the space needed to create courtrooms to house these much needed judges.

As exemplified by our work to find room for these judges, our Board of Commissioners has prioritized the funding that is included in POP 119 for the courthouse replacement planning dollars. Right now, the "courthouse" facilities in Washington County include a century old

building, a 50 year old building, and separate facilities in other building in the area around this central facility.

These shared facilities are not only aging in ways that are not sustainable, but the facilities are far to small to house our current court needs. To address all of these needs, we need to do comprehensive planning, including current facility assessment, future site assessment, design and engineering, and all the other efforts needed to prepare for a large capital investment in the next courthouse that can adequately service our rapidly growing community in a manner that is modern, safe and sustainable. The funding included in POP 119 is a vital step in the process.

Finally, we support efforts to find the right level to fund and manage the public defense system. We cannot maintain a functional system without all partners in the criminal justice process being sufficiently robust. Delays in the criminal court system leaves the county holding significant potential costs to track defendants, leaves victims without finality to their cases, and leaves defendant unserved and unable to have their day in court.

We appreciate the committee's consideration of these vast needs for the state's Judicial Department and the needs of Washington County within it.

Sincerely,

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# Circuit Court Hillsboro, Oregon

Courthouse, Juvenile, Criminal Law Enforcement Center

Presiding Judge: Hon. Beth L. Roberts



## Challenges and Successes of 2020 and 2021

- High COVID-19 rates in our county.
- Quickly and successfully implemented COVID-19 safety and hygiene measures.
- Rapidly spun up an off-site venue for 100's of hearings to be held.
- Safely conducted 94 jury trials, including two murder trials.
- Safely checked into the courthouse 4,460 jurors with zero COVID-19 cases reported.
- Implemented Jury Online Response.
- Supported remote and in-person services while remaining open to the public.
  - On site staff available to assist self-represented litigants.
  - Family Law Facilitators onsite, available to help those in crisis – e.g., protective orders.
- Development of Aid & Assist Rapid Evaluation docket to reduce OSH admissions and better serve those with fitness issues.
- Daily collaborative efforts to reduce pending hearing caseload.

## Vulnerable people and public safety

- Prioritized protective orders and criminal cases.
- Sustained treatment courts such as mental health, drug, veterans, and juvenile.
- Conducted safe jury orientations.
- Began Rapid Evaluations and Community Restoration dockets to facilitate fitness to proceed cases.

## Efficiency and access during COVID-19

- Prioritized Courthouse safety: masks/face shields, social distancing, plastic barriers, signage, cleaning, alternate hearing location and remote appearances.
- Technology: Remote hearings and telephonic appearances.
- Presiding Judge orders: Supporting safe and healthy environment and caring for community needs and concerns.

## Economic recovery and serving low-income communities

- Resources for self-represented people. In person and online.

## We request from the legislature:

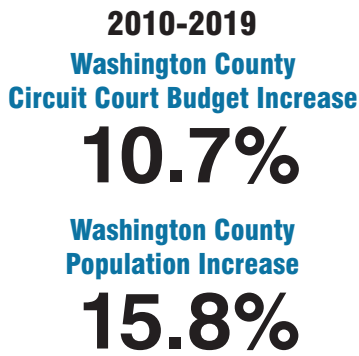
- Maintain current service level.
- Maintain and invest in treatment courts such as Mental Health and Veteran's.
- Offer Diversity Training in the workplace.
- Community Outreach Committee to build trust in the community we serve.



# Circuit Court Challenges & Opportunities: Funding, Staffing, and Infrastructure

- The Washington County Circuit Court is understaffed, the facilities are dated and they create barriers to the work we are trying to accomplish.
- Construction started on our Courthouse in 1928 and it opened in 1930.
- The County's population has grown from 30,000 when the Courthouse first opened to more than 610,000 today.
- Given the growing needs of Washington County, it's a good time to start thinking about what a modern Courthouse might look like.
- This opportunity allows us to approach public safety and the justice system as a whole, so that we may continue to evolve in response to the needs of our community.
- What might it look like to build a Courthouse for the 21st Century?
  - Co-locate services to help crime victims, survivors and those who might otherwise become justice-involved.
  - Community gathering spaces and classrooms to increase access to justice and serve aspiring attorneys from historically underrepresented communities.

Join us as we begin to imagine what we can do to center community in our public safety and justice systems.



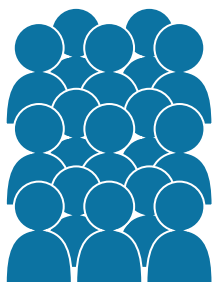
## Oregon Judicial Department Staff Workload Assessment

Actual versus Needed Staff for 5 Metropolitan Counties

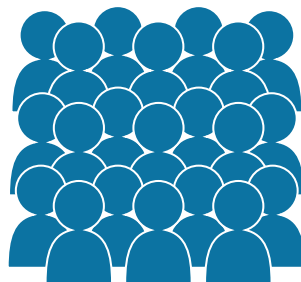
	OJD Workload %	Actual Staff	Needed Staff	% Difference
Washington	9.1	97	120	23.7
Marion	7.8	91	105	15.4
Multnomah	22.7	303	316	4.3
Lane	7.3	101	105	4.0
Clackamas	6.7	88	90	2.3

Source: National Center for State Courts' Oregon Judge and Staff Workload Assessments, 2017-19

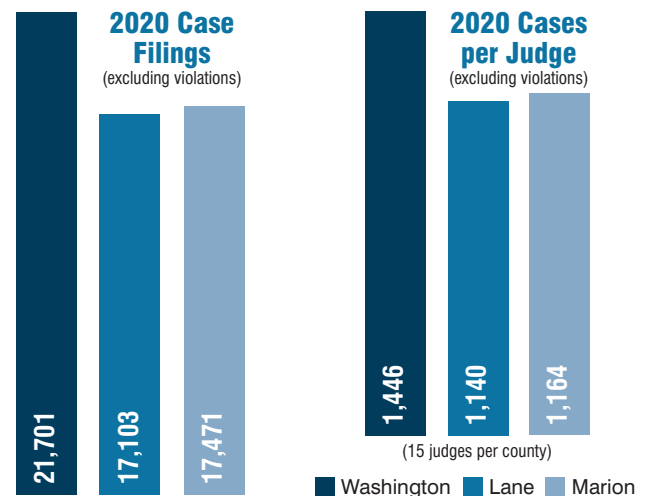
## Washington County's Oregon Judicial Department Workload **9.1%**



Actual Judges **15**



Needed Judges **21**



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