

March 22, 2023

House Committee on Judiciary
900 Court Street NE
HR D State Capitol
Salem, OR 97301-4048

Re: House Bill 3581 – Allowing Courthouse Expansions/Renovations using XI-Q Bonds

Honorable Chair Kropf, Honorable Vice Chairs, and committee members:


For the past 15 years, Oregon counties have actively participated in a state-wide concerted effort, with the Oregon Judicial Department (OJD) and our legislature, to assess the condition of court facilities, identify deficiencies, and prioritize funding for long-overdue improvement and/or replacement projects. This effort has confirmed that each county is unique and approaches providing suitable and sufficient facilities to meet the needs of their judicial systems differently. For some counties building new court facilities will be the only viable option. For others, the solution is to reconfigure, renovate, and/or expand their existing courthouses. However, for many counties, it is increasingly apparent the status quo is not sufficient. There is no “one size fits all” solution. As each year passes, rising construction costs create an even more daunting funding challenge for counties who need to fund essential facilities projects.

The creation of the Oregon Courthouse Construction Capital Improvement Fund (OCCCI) and the use of Article XI-Q bonds have provided a viable path for a small number of counties to finance courthouse replacements while many others—particularly rural counties—struggle to compete for general-fund-supported cash grants to address their most critical facility deficiencies incrementally. Unfortunately, a significant barrier to accessing the XI-Q bond program is that it is restricted to courthouse replacement projects or remodels of buildings that are not existing courthouses. In addition, many counties are unable to secure the required 50 percent match to qualify for the bond program.

House Bill 3581 will provide additional options for counties seeking to improve court facilities substantially. A significant change is that it includes expansions and renovations, which will help ensure more counties can provide improved judicial operating spaces for future generations. Counties will continue to rely on funding assistance and a collaborative partnership with the OJD and our State Courts Administration to deliver and maintain safe, adequate operating spaces for the courts.

We ask that you support the tools and flexibility provided by HB 3581 to give the counties additional options in finding the most cost-effective opportunities to meet these critical needs.

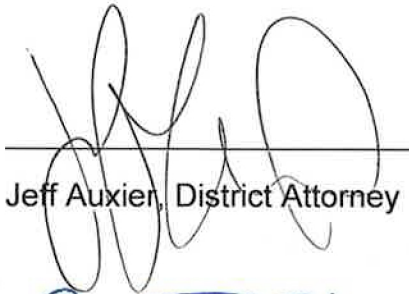
Respectfully,



Casey Garrett, Chair, Columbia County Board of Commissioners




Michael T. Clarke, Presiding Judge, Columbia County Circuit Court



Jeff Auxier, District Attorney



Erin Skaar, Chair, Tillamook County Board of Commissioners



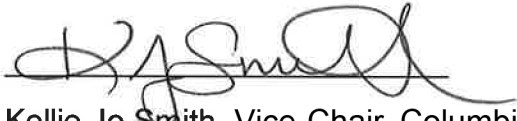
Mark Kujala, Chair, Clatsop County Board of Commissioners



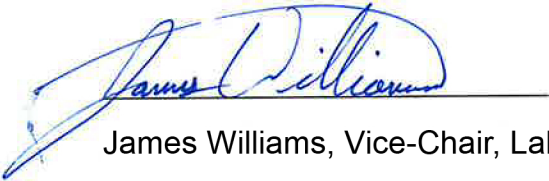
Kelley Minty, Kalamath County Commissioner



Barry Shullanberger, Chair, Lake County Board of Commissioners



Kellie Jo Smith, Vice-Chair, Columbia County Board of Commissioners



James Williams, Vice-Chair, Lake County Board of Commissioners



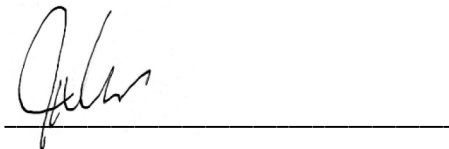
Derrick's DeGroot, Klamath County Commissioner



Daniel N. Dorran, Umatilla County Commissioner



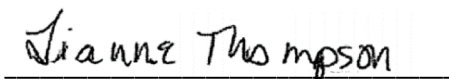
Courtney Bangs, Vice-Chair, Clatsop County Board of Commissioners



John Toyooka, Clatsop County Commissioner



John M Shafer, Umatilla County Commissioner



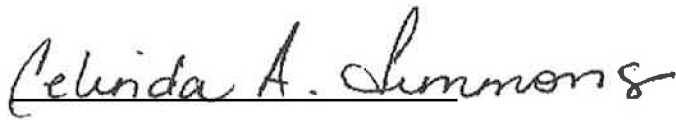
Lianne Thompson, Clatsop County Commissioner



David Yamamoto, Tillamook County Commissioner



Margaret Magruder, Columbia County Commissioner



Celinda A. Timmons, Umatilla County Commissioner



Pamela Wev, Clatsop County Commissioner



Mark Albertson, Lake County Commissioner