



Planned Parenthood Advocates of Oregon

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March 28, 2023

To: Chairs Kropf and Prozanski and members of the House and Senate Judiciary Committees,

Re: Support for SB 413, SB 337, HB 2467

As the state's leading political voice for reproductive healthcare, Planned Parenthood Advocates of Oregon is proud to be a part of the Fair Shot for All coalition, which is making important advancements to ensure that families in Oregon have a level playing field to achieve success. Planned Parenthood Advocates of Oregon is writing in strong support of SB 413, SB 337, and HB 2467

Every Oregonian facing criminal charges has a constitutional right to adequate, effective legal counsel, no matter who they are or how much money they have.

When our public defense system is chronically under-resourced, justice is out of reach for too many Oregonians. A rapidly changing economy and the COVID-19 pandemic put insurmountable stress on our public support systems; we've witnessed this firsthand amongst healthcare workers at Planned Parenthood health centers in Oregon. Across sectors, whether public health or the justice system, we must take bold action toward a more equitable and just Oregon.

A recent analysis found that 60% of lawyers at non-profit public defense firms in Oregon left their jobs over a nearly three-year span. Attorneys have cited uncompetitive pay and unwieldy caseloads that hindered their ability to provide adequate representation. Many leave the workforce to take private sector or state positions that pay better.

We must use multiple tools in our toolbox to stabilize, grow and retain our workforce. These bills tackle this issue through increased pay, manageable caseloads and a student loan repayment program. A combination of these tactics will help us attract new attorneys while retaining experienced ones. Reduced caseloads will lead to better representation, reduce errors and prevent burnout and turnover.

What happens in our criminal legal system impacts all of us, but it disproportionately harms Black and brown Oregonians as they are more likely to both be arrested and be victimized by crime. Black Americans are incarcerated in state prisons at nearly 5 times the rate of white Americans; and Latinx Americans are

incarcerated in state prisons at a rate that is 1.3 times the incarceration rate of white Americans. Planned Parenthood health centers across the state play a significant role in providing healthcare to BIPOC Oregonians, and needless to say, the compounding effects of disruption to one's employment, housing and stress levels while navigating the legal system can negatively impact health outcomes. Victims and survivors of crime are also harmed when justice is delayed and the system is too overloaded to center their individual needs or even support a trial happening because the accused's right to representation and a speedy trial are violated.

SB 413, SB 337, and HB 2467 include important investments and reforms to begin addressing the immediate crisis while building toward a more sustainable and just system which include the following:

- HB 2467 and SB 413, focus on workforce recruitment and retention by ensuring pay for providers to be at a commensurate level with state employees who provide similar services
- HB 2467 and SB 413 allow for the Office of Public Defense Services to administer grants to law schools in Oregon for supporting law students working in public defense, establish apprenticeship programs and other recruitment programs. It also allows for the agency to provide grants to contractors of public defense for recruitment of attorneys.
- HB 2467 and SB 413 also establish a loan repayment program through the Oregon State Bar that would allow for attorneys and staff of public defense services in Oregon to apply for grants to cover the costs of student loans during their 10 years of service needed for federal loan forgiveness.

The structural reforms proposed in SB 337 are also important in a number of ways:

- Moving public defense services to the executive branch and having all branches participate in appointment of the Commission, ensures that all our government leaders are keeping tabs on public defense.
- Includes a broader community in make up of the commission
- Starts a state employee trial division to ensure that we have employees that are able to meet representation needs, and provide baseline wages for contracted attorneys and staff

No one in Oregon should face criminal charges without access to an attorney. Planned Parenthood Advocates of Oregon believes in the possibility of a future in which we rebuild our public defense system to ensure that justice is within reach for all who seek it. **Please vote yes on SB 413, SB 337, and HB 2467.**

Sincerely,

Cassie Purdy
Political Director
Planned Parenthood Advocates of Oregon