



A STRONG VOICE FOR OREGON'S WORKERS

To: Chair Kropf
Vice-Chairs Andersen, Wallen
Members of the House Judiciary Committee

FR: Catie Theisen, Oregon AFL-CIO

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

March 30, 2023

The Oregon AFL-CIO represents 300,000 workers across Oregon and is a voice for all workers in the legislative process. As part of the Fair Shot coalition, we urge your support of SB 413, SB 337, HB 2467 as one of many needed solutions to help address the public defense crisis in Oregon.

Hundreds of Oregonians are currently stuck in limbo because Oregon has failed to uphold its constitutional responsibility to provide adequate legal counsel to those who can't afford a private attorney. With our public defense system so chronically under-resourced, people accused of crime are either waiting indefinitely for a public defender to become available or are negotiating plea deals without adequate legal support. This leads to system imbalances and vulnerabilities that contribute to unjust case outcomes, disproportionately impacting Black and brown communities.

This deeply entrenched issue will not be solved by pay rises alone. We must use multiple tools 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.

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

No one in Oregon should face criminal charges without access to an attorney. This policy package will fundamentally provide better access to justice for all Oregonians. We encourage your support of SB 413, SB 337 and HB 2467.