



Date: March 30, 2023

To: Senate Judiciary Committee; House Judiciary Committee

From: Oregon NOW

Re: Support for SB 413, 337, HB 2467

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

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in strong support of SB 413, SB 337, and HB 2467. **Oregon National Organization for Women (Oregon NOW)** strongly urges you to pass 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. Yet, hundreds of Oregonians are currently stuck in limbo because the state government has failed to uphold its constitutional responsibility to provide adequate legal counsel to those who can't afford a private attorney. When our public defense system is chronically under-resourced, justice is nearly impossible to achieve. Supporting our public defense system is an integral step toward a more equitable and just Oregon.

The American Bar Association found that Oregon only has about one-third of the public defense attorneys necessary to meet current service needs. 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. No one in Oregon should face criminal charges without access to an attorney. Together, we can rebuild our public defense system to ensure fairness and root out racism and classism.

Please pass SB 413, SB 337, and HB 2467 as soon as possible. Thank you.

Respectfully,

Kim Critelli
President, Oregon NOW
Legislative Co-Chair, Oregon NOW

Nancy Cook
Legislative Co-Chair, Oregon NOW