



**Joint Committee on Ways and Means**  
**Portland Community College – Sylvania Campus**  
**April 8, 2023**

Co-Chairs Steiner and Sanchez, and members of the committee,

My name is Joe Piucci. I am a lawyer in here Portland, and I am a member of the Board of Governors of the Oregon State Bar. The mission of the Oregon State Bar is to serve justice and the public interest by promoting respect for the rule of law, by improving the quality of legal services, and by increasing access to justice.

I am writing today on behalf of the members of the Oregon State Bar to advocate for adequate funding for the courts, for low-income legal services and for indigent defense – The Oregon State Bar’s three key budget priorities.

Fully funded courts are critical to protecting the rights of businesses and individuals alike. Oregon’s courts are seeing case numbers that have rebounded post-COVID. It is critical that courts maintain staffing levels that will enable them to continue to resolve cases quickly and fairly for all litigants.

When the legislature invests in the judicial system, it produces real results. The new Multnomah County Courthouse that I have the privilege to go to, is an example of this of how we can increase access to the justice system. This new facility has enable to the courts to provide more services to more Oregonians, and help individuals resolve the problems that brought them to court in the first place. Thank you for making that investment in our community

However, more need to be done in order to provide access to the legal system to all Oregonians. For example, about 78% of domestic relations cases have at least one party who is not represented by an attorney. In over half the cases, both sides are unrepresented. Throughout the civil legal system, large numbers of court users are unrepresented, meaning judges and court staff often have to spend additional time on each case.

This is the key reason the Oregon State Bar continues to advocate for funding for Oregon’s low-income legal service providers. Oregon’s Legal Aid providers are able to serve clients in all 36 Oregon counties thanks to the support of the legislature, and I urge you to continue to support this session.

Finally, I ask that you support adequate funding for indigent defense services in criminal cases – a crucial part of the public safety system. This means ensuring sufficient funding to enable public defenders to continue to ably represent all eligible clients, and supporting fair compensation for publicly funded attorneys in both the adult criminal and juvenile justice systems.

Thank you again for holding this hearing here today, and I'd be happy to answer any questions you might have.

Sincerely,

Joe Pucci,

Oregon State Bar Board of Governors