

Laura Rittall Investigations Inc.
P.O. Box 398
Toledo, OR 97391
503-473-2954

**LAURA RITTALL
INVESTIGATIONS
INC.**

My name is Laura Rittall. I am a Lincoln County resident and small business owner. I have been employed for 21 years as a criminal defense investigator, working primarily with attorneys appointed to represent indigent defendants here in Oregon.

I want to ask for your support in passing the Office of Public Defense Services budget, as submitted, along with Policy Option Package 114.

On April 14th, I spoke to you about how Oregon's indigent defense investigators have struggled to make a living wage. I did not have the time to discuss the fact that it is indigent defense that serves some of our communities most vulnerable people. Support for POP 114 is not simply financial support for investigators and attorneys, it is also for those citizens that need our services.

In my experience, my clients are often persons who have been or still are living with addiction, mental and physical illness, homelessness and poverty, intellectual disability, family and community violence, domestic abuse, and childhood trauma, etc. Unfortunately, these factors all increase the risks of becoming involved with the criminal justice system. Aside from legal advocacy, defense teams often help individuals and families gain access to other needed services, and help increase awareness of the cycles that brought them into the system to begin with.

We also work towards exposing prosecutorial errors and overreach and attempt to hold the justice system accountable to our constitutional rights. It is an essential job.

We had a public defense crisis before the pandemic created a huge backlog of cases. Now we are all scrambling to keep up and assure that everyone has access to legal support. It's no secret that we are failing, and it is our citizens who most need help that are suffering. I urge you to pass the OPDS budget, as submitted, along with the Policy Option Package 114.