



**Submitted to the Public Safety Subcommittee of Ways and Means on
April 19, 2023**

**Testimony in Support of SB 5532
By Shannon Wight, Deputy Director, Partnership for Safety & Justice**

Co-Chair Sollman, Co-Chair Evans, and Members of the Subcommittee,

At Partnership for Safety & Justice, we advocate for public safety and criminal justice policies that ensure accountability, equity, and healing for people convicted of crime, crime survivors, and the families and communities of both. For over 20 years, our work has promoted public safety with policies that keep families together, reduce racial disparities, and invest in communities across Oregon.

All Oregonians who are charged with a crime should have the right to an attorney to provide ethical and effective representation throughout the legal process. Public defenders do more than just provide representation. Public defenders **challenge** a system that often dehumanizes people charged with crimes. They **identify solutions** to help people convicted of crime get on a successful path and **connect** people to the service and support they need to thrive and become contributing members of our communities.

Public defenders are key participants in creating community safety. Unfortunately, Oregon does not currently have enough public defenders to meet the need, and we are losing more every day.

In recognition of this problem, Partnership for Safety & Justice urges the Legislature to allocate additional resources to ensure that no Oregonian is forced to go without representation in the judicial process.