

Dear Co-Chairs Sollman and Evans and Members of the Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On Public Safety,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony. My name is Spencer Trumm and I live in East Portland. I'm writing to you today in support of SB 5532 and POPs 101, 102, 103, 114, and 115.

As a community organizer who has worked with people across the state, I've heard many stories about painful experiences with the justice system. Some people I've worked with have told me about being charged with a crime and having next to no chance to defend themselves. They told me how they were assigned a public defender who truly cared, but barely had enough time and money to provide them with a quality defense. Others have shared how they were victimized by criminals, but never got to see justice because the District Attorney was forced to drop charges rather than proceed with patently unfair trials, where the defendant would have next to no access to legal defense.

The people who shared these stories with me did not always have much in common. But whether they felt like they were unfairly convicted for lack of proper defense or like their alleged assailant got off scot-free, they sought the same thing: justice. And they arrived at the same conclusion. Each believed that the system had unfairly let them down for lack of money.

The root of these stories is the severe underfunding of our public defense system. We do not spend enough money to appropriately compensate people working as public defense attorneys, paralegals, and investigators. This leads to understaffing and high rates of attrition, which, in turn, forces our remaining public defenders and their staffs to handle more cases with fewer resources at their disposal.

It doesn't have to be this way. But we can't claim that our system is fair if we do not spend the money necessary to ensure that indigent clients receive zealous advocacy on their behalf.

By funding the Public Defense Services Commission, SB 5532 and its accompanying POPs will give our public defenders the resources they need to defend their clients. And they will take important steps toward resolving our shortage of public defense workers—not just attorneys, but the investigators and staff who support their practices and allow them to provide more people with better service.

I urge you to pass SB 5532 and its accompanying POPs right away. Remember, as the saying goes, "Justice delayed is justice denied."

Sincerely,

Spencer Trumm