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**Testimony before Joint Committee of
Ways and Means**

May 3, 2023

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

My name is Lee Ann Donaldson, I am an attorney in Portland and I am writing today on behalf of the Oregon Campaign for Court Funding, a group of business and nonprofit leaders as well as Oregon State Bar leaders who are concerned about funding for Oregon's Judicial Branch.

Oregon's courts have historically struggled to maintain staffing at a level where they can uphold their constitutional duty to administer justice completely and without delay.

We urge the Legislature to consider the many benefits a healthy and engaged court system provides to Oregonians and provide adequate funding for the Oregon Judicial Department. Three funding priorities within the OJD budget are worth mentioning:

First, maintaining current service level funding for the court system will allow the courts to continue to provide timely services to the public and reduce impacts to public defense and public safety.

Second, continuing to implement a statewide pretrial release program that will decrease Oregon's reliance on cash bail, and allow release decisions to be made based on case specific risk assessments.

Finally, improving and expanding opportunities to use remote hearings, which enables more Oregonians to access the justice system.

Courts offer safety for the public by resolving criminal cases, certainty for businesses and organizations in disputes with customers, competitors and the government, protection for consumers, and resolution to families in crisis. Our constitution and statutes rightly require courts to deal with certain kinds of cases like criminal matters and many juvenile cases before others.

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Lower priority cases – such as civil disputes – fall to the back and move forward only as permitted by resolution of the cases at the front of the line. As Oregon’s courts move forward and address the backlog of cases that grew during COVID, our system has experienced additional challenges to provide court services to those in need.

The Oregon Campaign for Court Funding is committed to engaging with the legislature and the governor in a conversation about the budget for our court system. We hope for a constructive dialog. We realize that all parts of our state government have to pull together to support healthcare, transportation, public safety, and education, but we are convinced that adequate funding for our court system is a critically important part of our budget that must not be forgotten. We look forward to talking with you soon about these important issues.

Sincerely,

Lee Ann Donaldson
President, Oregon State Bar Board of Governors

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Lee Ann Donaldson", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.