



**TO: Senator Floyd Prozanski
Vice-Chair Kim Thatcher
Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee**

FR: Oregon District Attorneys Association

RE: SB 1541 - Support

February 6, 2024

The Oregon District Attorney's Association (ODAA) appreciates the opportunity to express support for SB 1541.

ODAA supports SB 1541, which adds three additional circuit court judges to the bench statewide. The bill includes the addition of a judge in Jackson County and Washington County in July 2024, and a circuit court judge in Clackamas County in July 2025. Access to justice is critical for our legal systems. The addition of judges to these counties can begin to relieve their docket capacities for both civil and criminal litigants.

Courts throughout the state are currently managing their criminal dockets at full capacity, experiencing overflow in criminal caseloads and prolonged durations for these cases. Even as courts physically expand, like the courthouse facilities currently being built in Clackamas County, they need full-time judges to fill the new courtrooms. Circuit Courts often rely on Plan B judges to fill the gaps. While Plan B judges help to plug gaps, they do not provide the increased permanency that a full-time position offers.

Additionally, the justice system's shift towards involving judges in treatment courts underscores the increased importance of judges' time. With caseloads on the rise throughout the state, the addition of judges becomes crucial to tackle and alleviate backlogs in county dockets. This trend indicates that more counties across the state will require this same investment.

Ensuring access to justice is vital for the proper functioning of our legal system. The addition of judges, regardless of their jurisdiction, will enhance courtroom capacity and expand that access.

ODAA urges your support for this bill.