



from the

OFFICE OF THE HOUSE SPEAKER

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900 Court St. NE,
Salem, Oregon 97301

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Chair Kropf, and members of the committee:

For the record, Speaker Rayfield in support of HB 4001. This legislation bolsters Oregon's specialty court system. These programs are one of the proven solutions we have in our tool box to help address the addiction crisis – they're evidence based programs that are highly effective and reducing recidivism.

Through this legislation, we can stabilize the funding for treatment courts and ensure that we are providing high functioning, effective diversion opportunities for the people who will benefit most from them.

When I first heard that Benton County's Specialty Court was closing down, I had a lot of questions. In a moment when so many in our communities are suffering from addiction and need treatment and services, why are we seeing these proven programs close down?

I spoke with Benton County District Attorney Haroldson and many others, and learned about the challenges facing our specialty court system, and in particular, drug courts around the state. From these conversations, I learned that despite closures in places like Benton and Deschutes County the Criminal Justice Commission, (CJC), has seen increased interest in specialty courts. While total funding has been stable, this increased interest has led to each court getting a little less of the pie, and that has limited what communities are able to offer.

Ultimately, the barriers facing each drug court are unique, although there are some consistent themes. Due to a wide variety of funding sources, and the intersection of multiple agencies and systems, an effective drug court requires a high level of coordination and buy-in from *local* institutions and participants. Each program relies on a team of experts including judges, prosecuting and defense attorneys, behavioral health providers, court coordinators, case managers, probation and social service providers such as child welfare, housing, etc. This team must function well at a programmatic level as well as for each individual participant. This can lead to distinct, localized challenges, making it a difficult problem to address with a statewide solution.

HB 4001 sets up a process to build a model that best meets the needs of communities across the state by establishing a taskforce. This taskforce will answer key questions to make sure our work in this space leads to our intended outcome: giving communities the tools they need to maintain

and grow their specialty courts so they can keep helping families and individuals take charge of their lives again.

Specifically, the taskforce will examine our existing specialty court funding structure, eligibility criteria, and accountability mechanisms in place so we can identify a consistent system across the state.

Additionally, I'm advocating for \$8.8 million for the CJC to meet the gap between interested courts and currently available funding.

Our addiction crisis is impacting every corner of our state. We must continue to find ways to connect people to the services they need. For those who engage with our criminal justice system, specialty courts are critical to their recovery and for their future.

I urge your support for HB 4001 and appreciate the opportunity to speak today.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'DRF', written over a horizontal line.

Speaker Dan Rayfield