



February 14<sup>th</sup>, 2024

**Written Testimony before the Senate Judiciary Committee  
Regarding SB 1576, -4 Amendments**

Dear Chair Prozanski, Vice-Chair Thatcher, and members of the Committee,

My name is Lynn Morley, I serve as the Judge of Wheeler County. I am writing to express my opposition to the proposed -4 Amendments to SB 1576.

As one of the six county judges vested with probate jurisdiction, authority, powers, functions, and duties under ORS 111.055 (1)(2) and named in proposed Subsection 3, I feel strongly that myself and all five other identified County Judges and their respective Courts should have ample opportunity to fully discuss and be directly involved in the substantial procedural change proposed by the -4 Amendments. I was first alerted to this proposed change on Friday, February 9<sup>th</sup>. Based on conversations with colleagues, I believe a similar circumstance exists in several of the effected Counties. This issue requires more time to allow discussion and input by all effected parties.

As written, the -4 Amendments would allow two County Commissioners to change the structure of a local government. It is my belief that the power to effect such a change should be vested in the citizens. Therefore, I respectfully encourage additional amendments be drafted allowing Counties to transfer probate authority only after approval of the electorate via a vote.

Additionally, I do not believe that an emergency exists in Wheeler County as it relates to this issue. If the Oregon Legislature believes that this authority is properly vested in a County Court consisting of three individuals, I think a more appropriate effective date would be January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2025. This will allow any new Commissioners or Judges elected in 2024 the opportunity to determine the structure under which they will serve their constituencies and afford the people an opportunity to select representatives that share their views on the matter.

Failing this, I would request that Wheeler County be removed from the legislation until such time as our County Court and the people we serve have an opportunity to engage in a public discourse about this matter.

Respectfully Submitted,

  
N. Lynn Morley  
Wheeler County Judge