



Board of Commissioners

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Joint Committee on Ways and Means,
Subcommittee on Capital Construction
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court Street NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

Dear Co-Chairs Girod, Holvey, and members of the committee,

Thank you for your leadership in supporting local communities across the state in addressing their critical capital and infrastructure. In Benton County, we have been working in partnership with the Oregon Judicial Department (OJD) over the last three years in planning, designing, and developing a new County Courthouse which will replace the existing and aging historic courthouse.

The historic Benton County Courthouse was built in 1888 and is the oldest courthouse in the Pacific Northwest currently being used for its original and intended purpose. Though structurally sound, the building would not withstand a major earthquake. Additionally, the building presents numerous challenges in meeting the day-to-day operational demands of the Courts, District Attorney's offices, law enforcement, defense bar, and patrons. Operational issues at the Courthouse range from tight corridors to cramped office spaces, ADA non-compliance, inadequate court rooms, lack of adequate staff and public space, inadequate separation of offenders and the public, lack of courthouse security, no attorney/client conference rooms, and one (1) elevator. With as many as 150 to 250 people in the courthouse at any given time, the building is too small and was never intended to be used as it is today.

The County and OJD have worked to design an \$86.6 million project to support both a new Courthouse as well as the County's District Attorney Office. With full funding, the plan will be to break ground in the Spring of 2024. The County has committed \$48.5 million to cover 100% of the cost for the District Attorney's Office, and its 50% of the cost for the Courthouse. To date, the State of Oregon has committed \$2.0 million of General Fund, along with an

additional \$29.2 million of resources through the allocation of XI-Q General Obligation Bonds.

Based on the estimated cost and dedicated resources, the State is currently \$6.9 million short its 50% share of the new Courthouse; the reasons for this shortfall are primarily due to:

- Unprecedented increases in inflation that have driven construction costs much higher than originally forecasted.
- Recalibration of the scope and size of the Courthouse to meet the statutory requirements of “suitable and sufficient”; and
- Additional costs associated with the OJD’s Furniture, Fixtures, and Equipment that were not included in the original estimates.

Both the County and the OJD have worked tirelessly over the last six months and are very confident it has negated as much of the overall fiscal impact as possible. With the allocation of this additional \$6.9 million, we will be able to begin construction this Spring with an anticipated completion date in Spring 2026.

The County respectfully asks the subcommittee to prioritize and approve the additional \$6.9 million matching funds, for allocation in the 2023/25 biennium, to complete the new Benton County Courthouse project.

Sincerely,

BENTON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS



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Chair



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Commissioner