

SB 474: Criminal Defense Clinics

February 4, 2025
Senate Committee on Judiciary



Our Mandate from the Legislature

- February 2024, HB 5204 passed
 - Legislature allocated **\$2.1 million dollars** to fund misdemeanor criminal defense clinics at all three Oregon law schools
- Schools were tasked with:
 - Providing intensive, structured training & supervision of **60 law students** to undertake misdemeanor cases in first year
 - Taking on **300-400 misdemeanor cases** in first year

Law School Clinical Model

- Gold standard in preparing law students for practice
 - **Hands-on experiential learning** for second- and third-year law students, typically in public service fields
 - Students work on real cases under **close supervision of clinical faculty**
 - Similar to clinical rotations for medical students
- Availability of clinics **can be a draw for prospective students**
- All clinics include:
 - Weekly classroom component
 - Intensive training and supervision
 - Emphasis on students leading representation of clients
 - Student certification as Certified Law Students, including second-year students

Structure of Clinics & Counties Served

Lewis & Clark

- Year-long
- Housed at Metropolitan Public Defender
- Serves **Multnomah County & Washington County**

Willamette

- Semester-long
- Housed at Willamette University School of Law
- Serves **Marion County**

University of Oregon

- Semester-long
- Housed at Multnomah Defenders, Inc. & Public Defender Services of Lane County
- Serves **Multnomah County & Lane County**

Progress Snapshot: February 2025

- **49 students** have participated in the Clinics between Fall 2024 and Spring 2025 semesters
 - Additional students will participate for Summer semester
 - **On target to meet goal** of 60 students participating in Clinics by August 2025
- Students have provided public defense services on **296 cases** since August 2024
 - **Will greatly exceed goal** of handling 300-400 cases by August 2025

Number of Cases Promised for 1 year v.
Cases Opened in First 5 Months

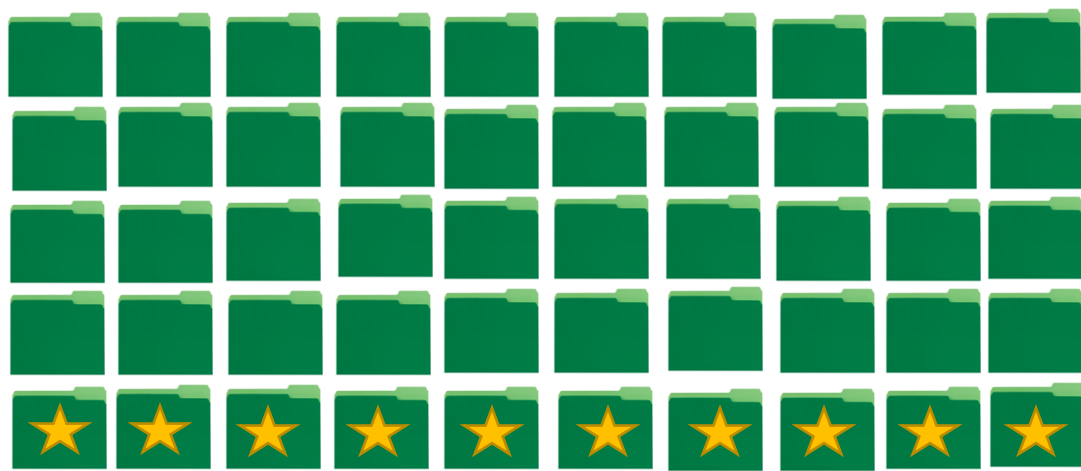
300-400
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Promised Number of Students Trained for 1 year v.
Number of Students Trained in First 5 Months



Number of Cases Promised for 1 year v.
Projected Number of Cases for 1 year



Projected to exceed expectations by 100 cases.

Promised Number of Students Trained for 1 year v.
Projected Number of Students Trained for 1 year



Projected Progress:

- **Projecting out for the 2025-2027 biennium:**
 - We expect to train a total of **120 students** through the Clinics
 - We expect to provide public defense services **on nearly 1,000 cases.**
 - We anticipate that current 3L students in the Clinics, when hired into full-time attorney positions, will be able to **start taking on lesser felony cases in mid-2026.**

Helping to Solve Oregon's Short & Long-Term Public Defense Needs

Short-term Benefits

- Addressing public defense crisis today
 - Over 225 **cases taken off unrepresented lists** in Multnomah, Washington, and Marion Counties
 - Assisting with increased burden to public defender offices as a result of recriminalization / HB 4002
- Providing gold-standard **experiential learning** for Oregon law students

Long-Term Benefits

- Building a **pipeline of practice-ready public defenders**
 - Students who have completed clinics will be able to handle lesser felony cases within first year
 - Students will have confidence and comfort to handle demands longer-term
- **Attracting desirable candidates** to Oregon law schools to pursue public defense

Our Ask: Fund SB 474

- **SB 474 allocates \$3.6 million in ongoing funding to Oregon's three law schools to continue offering intensive, structured training and supervision of court certified law students to undertake misdemeanor clinics.**