

Dear Chair Prozanski, Vice-Chair Thatcher, Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide supportive comments on SB 474 as well as for your attention to public defense in Oregon. My name is Sophie Olson, and I am a 3L at the University of Oregon. Last year, I participated in the Criminal Defense Clinic with the Public Defenders of Lane County. To date, it has been one of my most impactful and memorable law school experiences.

I participated in this clinic for several reasons, but mainly to gain real-world experience representing clients and to help with the Oregon public defense crisis. The cases I worked on involved real people, with real misdemeanor charges, and real stories. I have heard many attorneys say that law school doesn't teach you how to be a lawyer. Clinics do. I was able to manage these cases from start to resolution, with excellent guidance from the attorneys at the firm. Not only did I learn the legal ins-and-outs of working on a case, but I learned how to connect with the clients and fight for just outcomes.

I genuinely believe that my time in the clinic helped me prep for real-world work post-graduation and post-bar exam. Working with the attorneys through the clinic gave me insights into public defense that I truly would not have been able to get elsewhere. I have worked in criminal defense for a few years now, even prior to law school. But being a law clerk or legal assistant simply does not have the same impact as being directly responsible for an individual's defense.

These clinics are essential to creating zealous and eager public defenders, which our state so desperately needs. Ensuring that new lawyers, such as myself, can readily contribute to the system carries a level of importance that cannot be understated.

I strongly urge the committee to support continued funding for the law school public defense clinics through SB 474. By doing so, the legislature will ensure that more students receive adequate training, addressing the crucial shortage of defense attorneys in Oregon.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sophie Olson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sophie Olson