

LETTER IN SUPPORT OF SB 474

Hood River, OR
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Chair Prozanski, Vice-Chair Thatcher, Members of the Committee:

4 FEBRUARY 2025

Thank you for the opportunity to provide supportive comments on SB 474 and for your attention to public defense in Oregon. My name is Jerrett C. Glass and I am a senior attorney at Columbia Gorge Defenders. You likely don't remember me but I applied to be a legislative aide through the Legislative Clinic at the University of Oregon School of Law. Likely a current law student/legislative aide is reading this letter right now, I remember how busy all of you were during session. However, more on point to this letter I also participated in the Criminal Defense Clinic at University of Oregon School of Law to gain real-world experience representing clients and to prepare for a career in public defense.

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Back in 2010 I started my career in criminal law with the Prosecution Clinic and found that although I enjoyed the area of work, however, the perspective was skewed from my world view. Something to that effect is what I wrote in my closing letter in the Clinic to Erin Zemper, the DDA running the clinic at the time. I then joined the Defense Clinic for the next year and a half, and I found my people.

At first, I worked with Hugh Duvall and Thomas Fagan. Hugh taught us in the classroom and Thomas (Tom) taught us in the courtroom. Even with the extremely reduced caseload, only a handful of misdemeanors, the work was fast paced, hectic, and a constant scramble. It was amazing. Hugh's tutelage in the classroom was professional and intellectual. Tom's lessons were sharp and cunning. The combination of styles mixed perfectly with the real-world practice of being a true public defender.

During my time as a CLS I managed to conduct four trials, two to a jury. This was on top of the variety of misdemeanor cases I managed from start to finish. I gained experience talking to clients, especially about harder issues, such as, having to do jail time, weighing the risks of losing your job by having to come to court over and over again or go to jail, and pleading guilty even when I did not think my client was guilty due to the risk- (that was a tough conversation then and still is, especially now, that my case load goes all the way to murder cases). These experiences separated me from the pack when applying for jobs as I was basically lessor felony qualified out of the gate.

The experience gained in the clinic has helped me endure as a public defender. You might be aware, but the usual burnout of a public defender is around 10 years, though that statistic is out of date, especially in the midst of the current crises. However, I can safely say that I will continue in this profession, and that is in no small part to the experience, the relationships formed, and the law learned while in the Criminal Defense Clinic during law school.

I can't imagine starting this job with no practical experience. On day one I was handed thirty cases, on day two I was handed thirty more. Without the foundation of the clinics, I likely would have burned out and never had the career I've had. As you and other members of our legislature try to figure out a way out

of this crisis I think funding Defense Clinics in all three of Oregon's universities is a long term plan that will pay dividends in the years to come.

I 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 the training they need to serve as public defenders, addressing a critical shortage of qualified attorneys and strengthening Oregon's justice system.

Sincerely,

Jerrett C. Glass

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Proud Criminal Defense Attorney

PS. Please excuse the typos and sentence fluency issues. I am a trial attorney not an appellate attorney.