

Northwestern School of Law
of Lewis & Clark College

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RE: Testimony in Favor, SB 474

February 5, 2025

Chair Prozanski, Vice-Chair Thatcher, and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee:

I write in strong support of Senate Bill 474, which would provide critical funding for public defense clinics at Oregon's three law schools.

These clinics play an essential role in addressing Oregon's public defense crisis. At Lewis & Clark Law School, we have partnered with Metropolitan Public Defenders in Multnomah and Washington counties to give students hands-on experience handling misdemeanor cases under the close supervision of an adjunct professor. Additionally, some Lewis & Clark students are working in the University of Oregon's Portland clinic with Metropolitan Defenders Inc. Collectively, these students are projected to handle more than 250 cases by the end of the summer—cases drawn directly from the list of unrepresented defendants.

Beyond immediate casework, these clinics help build a sustainable pipeline into criminal law practice. Through this immersive training, students graduate ready to practice law, with most expected to enter the criminal justice system as defense attorneys or prosecutors. We are also actively encouraging them to consider positions in Oregon's rural areas, where the need for legal representation is particularly urgent.

State funding is essential to keeping these clinics operational. It supports the adjunct faculty who provide full-time oversight and ensures that our public defense partners are appropriately compensated for the resources the clinics utilize. Lewis & Clark also invests significantly in preparing students for this work, ensuring they are ready to represent clients as soon as they begin their clinical experience.

The public defense clinics represent a unique and collaborative partnership among Oregon's three law schools and the state. Faculty and administrators meet regularly to set goals, monitor progress, and celebrate student successes. This cooperative approach strengthens Oregon's legal system while expanding access to justice for those most in need.

I urge your support for Senate Bill 474 to sustain and expand this vital initiative. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Alicia Ouellette".

Alicia Ouellette
Jordan D. Schnitzer Dean
Lewis & Clark Law School