

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

Thank you for the opportunity to provide supportive comments on SB 474 and for your attention to public defense in Oregon. My name is Gabrielle Healy and I am a current student in the Lewis and Clark Criminal Defense Clinic. I participated in this clinic to gain real-world experience representing clients and to prepare for a career in public defense.

I believe that the best learning experiences are hands-on experiences, and clinics represent a valuable opportunity to gain experience and training for a future career, as well as a real opportunity to help clients. While learning in the classroom is important, learning in a hands-on setting is an invaluable experience to best prepare me for my future career. I learn best through hands-on work, and the clinic helps me to gain experience understanding what criminal defense is like day-to-day. The clinic helps me to understand the field more fully, before applying to jobs after graduation. Working in the clinic has given me valuable insight into what a job as a public defender looks like, and has given me encouragement to pursue a career in public defense. I would not be as passionate about the field if not for this experience.

Working with attorneys at Multnomah Defenders Inc., has shown me what the job looks like, giving me opportunities to ask real and relevant questions about the job, and learning more about practice. I am driven to do this work by seeing the real impact public defense can have in improving people's lives, one cannot see the impact on real people by only learning in a classroom setting. Learning in a public defense setting is invaluable experience for my future career. My clinic experience has shown me that I can do the work of public defense, and has encouraged me to pursue a job in the field. I would not be as comfortable applying for, and pursuing a job in public defense if not for the clinic. We need more attorneys in public defense, and the clinic allows students an opportunity to have real experience in the job before graduation.

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,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'GHEALY', written in a cursive style.

Gabrielle Healy
Lewis and Clark Law Class of 2025