

Submitter: Jordon Huppert
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Judiciary
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB474

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 Jordon Huppert and I am a practicing attorney working with the Oregon Public Defense Commission. I am providing these comments in my personal capacity and not as a representative of the agency. I feel it is important for me to write in support of this bill as my time in the Criminal Defense Clinic at University of Oregon School of Law in 2009 was instrumental in starting my career in public defense, connecting me to the support network that kept me in the profession, and helped shape the next 15 years of my professional life.

In my third year of law school, I signed up for the defense clinic because I had been told that litigation experience would make me a more attractive candidate for a job in the field of environmental law. I never thought that I would find a profession in that time, but life is full of surprises. The first day of the clinic I, and most of the other students, were given a DUI case to be our cases. While it was intimidating to be handed a person's criminal case and told that I was responsible for it was going to end up, the lawyer who was in charge of the clinic, Tom Fagan, made it clear that he would help shepherd us every step of the way. We learned how to organize the case file, what we needed to have ready at hand for client meetings, how to review police reports (this was before the prevalence of body cameras and in car video), what else we needed to make sure to specifically request from the DA and how to push to make sure they provided it, how to prepare the case for court, and perhaps most importantly how to interact with the client. It was my first time meeting with someone accused of a crime and it was an eye-opening experience. Though they were charged with a misdemeanor there were real world consequences to their life that I hadn't expected. With Tom's help we worked through our first cases and on to our second, and third. I was even able to represent one client in a trial and got my first taste of working with a jury.

The skills I learned in the clinic helped me be comfortable enough to open my own law practice shortly after law school. The connections that I made during the clinic helped me establish a robust practice of work in public defense in the area's municipal courts and eventually around the state. I have gotten to meet people that I would have never met, see things I never would have seen (for better and worse), and do things I would have never thought I'd be capable of doing thanks to the start I got in the clinic. Practically though, the skills I learned let me jump feet first into a full-time legal practice. I already knew how to manage a file, the steps in working a case, and how to deal with clients. I had experience handling a case load and more

importantly I had an office full of people who I could call for advice when my caseload started to get heavier. I say without a doubt that if I had not had the experience with the defense clinic that I would not have been able to start that practice, would never have gotten recruited by Public Defender Services of Lane County and would not have had a career in public defense. I can also say with no doubt that I am not alone in being able to make that statement. Clinics are one of the best pipelines from law school into public defense work.

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 exposure to public defense and the training they need to serve as public defenders. Adding more public defenders to the system is the only way to address the critical shortage of qualified public defense attorneys and strengthening Oregon's justice system.

Thank you,
Jordon Huppert