

February 19, 2025

The Honorable Floyd Prozanski  
Chair, Oregon Senate Judiciary Committee  
State Senator  
900 Court St. NE S-413  
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Senator Prozanski and member of the Committee,

As Co-Chairs of the Lane County Women Lawyers, we are writing to respectfully ask your support for the Chief Justice's request for two new judicial officers for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Judicial District (Lane County Circuit Court.) The Lane County Circuit Court has been allocated 15 judges for forty years. But that allocation does not reflect the growth of our community over the past forty years or the radical change that has occurred in the nature of the work the court does.

The additional judges will serve two purposes. First, funding for new judges will help provide badly needed relief to Lane County's justice system. They will provide relief to our current judges who are working at an unsustainable pace to keep up with oversized and complex caseloads and meet the needs of our community members. Members of our community deserve access to justice and the time they need to make their case. Our current bench does the best they can to provide that for our community, but we also know that because they have the same number of judges in 2024 as they did in 1984, every hearing in Lane County is, and must, take place under the shadow of time constraints.

Second, funding for new judges will help Lane County's current bench continue the innovative work for which Lane County Circuit Court has been known. Lane County Circuit Court's Treatment Court was one of the first substance abuse treatment courts in the United States. Our community benefits from specialty courts for veterans, juveniles, and the mentally ill. In addition, our large number of self-represented litigants in family law cases are served by judicially led status conference dockets that help them navigate the court system without an attorney.

Lane County judges are national, state and local leaders in juvenile, criminal and family law. Our judges have the expertise to create innovative programs to address our community's problems. But without your investment in the right sizing of the Lane County bench, they won't be able to continue to do their current work, much less add to their workload.

If you have any questions as to whether investing in two new judges for the Lane County Circuit Court will pay off, consider that our judges and attorneys have worked together to stave off the worst of the unrepresented defendant crisis in criminal cases. We know that finding consensus and building relationships between groups with different interests is a lot of work and is one of many "outside the courthouse" leadership roles that adds to our judges' already unsustainable workload. But they have undertaken that task, and it has paid off in real and measurable ways.

Please consider Lane County's request for two new judges. Your investment will be the deciding factor in whether our community is able to maintain our current level of judicial services. And the only way that our bench will be able to appropriately address our rising issues including our looming crises in housing and behavioral health.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jeslyn Everitt" followed by "Shannon Richard".

Jeslyn Everitt and Shannon Richard

Co-Chairs, Lane County Women Lawyers