



# ONTARIO POLICE DEPARTMENT

**JASON COOPER**  
INTERIM CHIEF OF POLICE

January 28<sup>th</sup>, 2025

Oregon State Legislature  
Joint Committee on Ways and Means  
Subcommittee on Public Safety  
900 Court Street, NE  
Salem, OR 97301

Re: Letter of Support for Malheur County Courthouse

To the Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Public Safety:

As the Interim Police Chief, I am honored to represent the Ontario Police Department in conveying the highest support for development, funding and establishment of a new courthouse for the County of Malheur. Funding this project is vital to improve and bring forth a new modernized judicial building to Malheur County. The current courthouse serves as a critical institution for our community, providing essential judicial and administrative functions that impact residents, businesses, and local government agencies alike.

The existing facility faces significant challenges, including infrastructure limitations, space constraints, and security concerns, which hinder the courthouse's ability to operate efficiently and effectively. Currently, there are two Courtrooms, only one of which has the capacity to meet the full needs of a judicial officer. This has a significant impact on the Court's ability to deliver justice in a timely manner. Significant staff shortages exist and the building lacks insufficient space for staff, attorneys, witnesses and juror members to efficiently operate, while struggling with privacy issues. Public safety concerns surround the non-existence of a dedicated holding room for adults in custody appearing for trial. Not only is this current situation a safety concern for all, but it also compromises the integrity of courtroom proceedings when defendants are detained in the jury room. These are just some of the hardship examples that exist.

The requested planning funds would allow Malheur County to develop a comprehensive strategy for addressing these challenges and ensuring that the courthouse remains a functional, safe, and accessible resource for all.

An investment in courthouse planning is an investment in justice, public safety, and community well-being. By securing these funds, Malheur County will be better equipped to assess critical needs, explore modernization solutions, and plan for a facility that meets the demands of the current population and evolving legal landscape.

I urge you to support this funding request, recognizing its importance in preserving the integrity and effectiveness of our local judicial system. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Jason Cooper  
Interim Police Chief

444 SW 4<sup>TH</sup> STREET, ONTARIO, OR 97914

OFFICE: (541) 889-7684 EXT 3225    FAX: (541) 889-3026    JASON.COOPER@ONTARIOOREGON.ORG