



February 26, 2025

Co-Chairs Broadman and Evans and Members of the Joint Ways & Means Subcommittee on Public Safety,

My name is Lloyd Bernstein, and I am appearing today on behalf of the Oregon Association of Defense Counsel (“OADC”). OADC is an organization of approximately 550 lawyers in the State of Oregon who devote a significant portion of their practice to civil defense litigation. For many years, OADC has consistently supported a fully-funded judicial branch, capable of safely providing essential services to all citizens.

OADC strongly supports HB 5012, and urges the legislature to ensure that the Judicial Branch is funded at Current Service Levels for the 2025-27 biennium. The Judicial Department’s 2024-2027 Justice Campaign highlights four key commitments to improving the services, user experience, public trust and welcoming courthouse culture that we, as private practice attorneys, know are critical to expanding and ensuring justice for all litigants, including our most vulnerable populations.

We are strongly supportive of the Oregon Judicial Department’s Justice Campaign and we urge the legislature to recognize that the current service level funding requested in HB 5012 is critical to implementing that campaign.

I would also like to bring to your attention two policy option packages of particular interest to OADC. Our organization has long believed that judicial salaries in this state must be increased to attract the most qualified and talented members of the Bar to judicial appointments. We are therefore strongly supportive of Policy Option Package 102 to improve judicial compensation. When adjusted for cost of living, Oregon’s salary for circuit court judges is currently 43rd in the country. These salaries simply do not match the responsibilities of the position. A fairly paid judiciary is essential to the state’s ability to continue to attract highly qualified and skilled jurists, and we strongly urge the legislature to implement the salary increases as proposed by the Chief Justice in POP 102.

Finally, OADC is strongly supportive of POP 108, which adds six additional trial judges and associated staff spread across five key counties: Crook, Douglas, Clackamas, Umatilla and Lane. The timely resolution of complex disputes, particularly complex civil disputes, requires adequate judge time and staff, but based on the 2015 National Center for State Courts (NCSC) workload model, Oregon courts face significant workload challenges. Delays in the disposition of civil cases like contract and business disputes, tort claims, civil rights claims, and employment disputes can have far-reaching impacts on our economy, negatively affecting both the daily lives of individual litigants and the business decisions of organizations both large and small throughout the state. POP 108 will take an important step toward addressing those challenges by



increasing judicial capacity and thus allow the judicial branch to better promote access, inclusion and innovation.

OADC supports these budget proposals, because we believe that these investments are necessary to provide the baseline funding and resources for the judiciary to fulfill its core constitutional mission of providing timely justice in our communities. We urge you to ensure access to justice for all members of our community through adopting HB 5012 and the budget requests in Policy Option Packages 102 and 108.

Thank you for your consideration of OADC's input, and thank you for the opportunity to testify.

OADC Government Affairs Committee

Daniel Larsen – President

Megan Cook – President-Elect

Kristen Curtis – Secretary/Treasurer, OADC

Lloyd Bernstein – Chair, OADC Government Affairs Committee

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