



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 5012
Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Public Safety
FEBRUARY 27, 2025

Co-Chair Broadman, Co-Chair Evans, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Mae Lee Browning, Legislative Director of the Oregon Criminal Defense Lawyers Association. I testify on behalf of OCDLA in support of HB 5012.

OCDLA's 1,200 members statewide include public defense providers, private bar attorneys, investigators, experts, and law students. Our attorneys represent Oregon's children and parents in juvenile dependency proceedings, youth in juvenile delinquency proceedings, adults in criminal proceedings at the trial and appellate level, as well as civil commitment proceedings throughout the state of Oregon. Our mission is championing justice, promoting individual rights, and supporting the legal defense community through education and advocacy.

OCDLA would like to highlight 3 very important POPs to fund:

Judicial Compensation (POP 102)

All judges are lawyers. We want to recruit from the entire pool of bright and talented attorneys in Oregon without the consideration of compensation dissuading them from seeking judicial positions. In this important leadership role, we want diverse judges who reflect the people in Oregon that need the assistance of the court the most.

As many of our members know all too well - working with clients during the most difficult circumstances and times in their lives - that mental and emotional stress can take a tremendous toll. It is easy to see why additional financial stressors could be enough to cause even the most dedicated public servants to leave for new opportunities with better pay and benefits.

Judges are essential to effectuate our system of justice, and only experienced, well-trained judges deeply committed to public service have the understanding and skill to improve the lives of people.

Courthouse Security (POP 101)

Any attorney who frequents the courthouse can tell you that some of the most valuable public servants we have are the folks who work security at the doors. They often know you by name, ease the anxiety of jurors, and are happy to answer questions as they can. We shouldn't overlook the people who ensure the safety of Oregonians in need of court assistance.

Often, people attend court under desperate circumstances to address the most sensitive issues in their lives. Properly funded court security can bring much needed safety and peace of mind even during difficult times. This ask is simple, one providing for basic public needs, and foundational to the function of every court.

Additional Judges (POP 108)

We need more judges. We need more judges for public safety. We need more judges with more time to hear the concerns and pleas of the people they serve. We need more judges to reach a healthy balance of judicial efficiency and thoughtful decision making.

The National Center for State Courts (NCSC) is the gold standard for sharing knowledge and expertise to address current and emerging trends in state court administration. Based on the 2015 NCSC workload model, and using current workload data, it was determined that Oregon needs an additional 33 judges to properly effectuate justice. This is the same organization that collaborated with the Rand Corporation and the ABA to produce the National Public Defense Workload Study.¹ Just because justice is costly doesn't mean we don't fund it. In our system of justice, constitutional guarantees are a necessity, not a luxury.²

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¹ https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA2559-1.html

² Gideon v. Wainwright, 372 U.S. 335 (1963).