

My name is Jeffrey Hedlund. I am attorney in Lake County, Oregon, which is a frontier county in Oregon. I have been providing public defense services to the State of Oregon and my local community in Klamath and Lake Counties since 2008. I grew up in Lakeview, Oregon and came back to practice law after graduating from Law school. My firm has been providing legal services in Lake County, Oregon since at least the late 1970s and I am sole attorney left in the firm.

Since I started practicing, I have watched the legal community decline in my area from 4-6 attorneys to two public defenders and the district attorney of Lake County, Oregon. We are not attracting new attorneys to our area due to the rural and remote nature of our county. Without a contracting extension of a longer duration, we are unable to plan and keep continuity for our area for providing constitutionally mandated representation of indigent clients. We are not going to keep replacing attorneys as they retire or attract new attorneys to do what I do without assurances of a longer-term commitment from the State of Oregon which would be represented by a longer extension.

Like the rest of rural eastern Oregon we are a legal desert that requires a unique person willing to drive sometimes a hundred miles or more one way in adverse weather conditions to visit clients and make court appearances especially as a dependency and delinquency attorney with my practice between Lake and Klamath Counties. I am committed to providing the best representation to my adult and juvenile clients and I deeply care about these areas of law as I these populations are vulnerable and often overlooked.

I am passionate about serving my community and the people of the community and would like to plan on continuing a long tradition of representing public defense clients, however that is difficult and will also be impossible to ever hire new attorneys or attract new counsel to my region without being able to guarantee myself and other new hires or just additional attorneys a stable practice from State of Oregon. We are part of solution here and we are the last people standing in areas that even the Oregon State Bar Association are severely underserved in legal representation, hence why we now have loan forgiveness for attorneys practicing in rural/frontier counties. Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.

Respectfully,

Jeff Hedlund