

Date:	March 4th, 2025
To:	Chair Tran, Vice Chairs Grayber and Lewis, and Members of the House Committee on Emergency Management, General Government, and Veterans
From:	Association of Oregon Counties Legislative Affairs Manager, Justin Low
Subject:	Support – HB 3369

Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony in strong support of HB 3369. For the record, my name is Justin Low, and I am a Legislative Affairs Manager offering testimony on behalf of the Association of Oregon Counties (AOC).

AOC is a non-partisan member organization that advocates on issues that unite all county governing bodies and have an impact on county functions, governance, budgets, and services. The service relevant to my testimony today involves close collaboration with the Oregon Judicial Department, with whom Oregon counties partner with to provide security, courtrooms, and office space for the state's Circuit Court system.

Local Flexibility in Improving Courthouse Facilities

While counties shoulder much of the costs of providing offices for the state Circuit Court system, the state makes significant investments in capital construction for county courthouse spaces. Currently, the OJD budget typically contains bonds that strictly help counties with replacing courthouses. While incredibly helpful for counties that choose to or have the means to provide matching funds for a courthouse replacement, many localities face the reality that a complete replacement is simply not feasible—either due to economic constraints, logistical difficulties, political considerations, or some combination of the three. This legislation provides a crucial alternative: enabling counties to leverage bond funds to expand or remodel their existing courthouses through a method that meets community capacity, while also addressing safety and structural concerns.

Strengthening State and County Partnerships

This bill aligns with the longstanding partnership between state and county governments in Oregon. Allowing counties to obtain bond funding with the state's support for courthouse expansion and renovation demonstrates a commitment to collaborative solutions. Such partnerships not only ensure prudent spending of public dollars but also foster trust and accountability across government levels.

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Conclusion

On behalf of county governments across Oregon, we urge your support for this legislation. By permitting bond funds to be used for cost-effective courthouse expansions or remodels, this bill addresses both practical and financial constraints while ensuring public safety and continued access to justice.

We appreciate your consideration of this testimony and respectfully request your “Aye” vote in support of the bill. Thank you for your time, and for recognizing the importance of adapting our courthouses to meet the evolving needs of Oregon’s communities.

Respectfully submitted,

Justin Low

Legislative Affairs Manager for Governance and Revenue