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To: House Committee on Judiciary
From: Heather Busby, Executive Director
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Re: HB 2614

Dear Chair Kropf, Vice-Chairs Chotzen and Wallan, Members of the Committee:

Youth, Rights & Justice (YRJ), a non-profit public defense provider, has been dedicated exclusively to juvenile law for 50 years. Each year, we provide holistic, client-centered representation to hundreds of children, youth, and parents in Oregon's juvenile court system.

We oppose the amendments to HB 2614 that would remove national and regional best practices on caseloads, resources, and compensation for public defenders from Oregon law. These standards are essential safeguards that protect our clients' constitutional rights and are vital to the retention of public defense professionals.

National standards ensure constitutional practice. For example, The Gault Center has developed National Youth Defense System Standards that "provide a framework to ensure that youth defense delivery systems satisfy constitutional mandates of due process and equal protection. To that end, this framework outlines steps that states must take to comply with the minimum requirements of the U.S. Constitution that safeguard the unique vulnerabilities of youth facing deprivations of liberty."¹

Without the framework of national and regional standards, Oregon will not have the proper framework to ensure constitutionality.

Removing national caseload standards will not solve Oregon's representation crisis—it will only accelerate the exodus of experienced defenders and further destabilize our public

¹ The Gault Center, National Youth Defense System Standards (2024)
<https://www.defendyouthrights.org/wp-content/uploads/National-Youth-Defense-System-Standards.pdf>

defense system. The current crisis requires focus on the recruitment and retention of public defenders, not the removal of essential standards.

Thank you for your consideration and your commitment to upholding constitutional protections for all Oregonians.