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Dear Members of the Ways and Means Committee:

I am a licensed private investigator in the State of Oregon. I support POP 104 and the attendant increase in investigator pay. I am also asking that the implementation for the rate increase take effect July 2025.

Public defense investigators are paid significantly less than what we were paid in 1985 when adjusted for inflation. In 1985 investigators were paid \$25/hr. The equivalent of that today is \$75/hr. We are asking only to be brought to the same pay rate that we were paid in 1985. Expenses associated with maintaining a private investigations business are also significantly higher than in 1985, including bonding, insurance, and numerous other business expenses that are required.

Currently the state struggles to recruit and retain investigators in public defense due to the low rate. Increasing the rate will keep more investigators in state public defense, and will attract desperately needed new investigators.

Where there are not enough investigators, attorneys must do tasks that would otherwise be done by investigators. More investigators mean that these tasks can be done for less money, and attorneys can take more cases. Recruiting and retaining investigators is a key component to resolving the public defense crisis in Oregon

Delaying the rate increase by six months further delays progress toward resolving the public defense crisis. We are asking for the rate change to be implemented in July of this year.

Sincerely,

Daniel Kraus