

**TESTIMONY ON HOUSE BILL 3180  
BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY  
MARCH 18, 2025**

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

The Oregon Judicial Department (OJD) is pleased to submit this testimony in support of HB 3180, which would appropriate \$1.25 million in matching funds for the Washington County Courthouse Replacement Project. The Chief Justice's Recommended Budget also includes this funding request, in Policy Option Package 118.

Many counties cannot afford to replace unsafe courthouses without state assistance, yet some courthouse replacement planning and feasibility costs cannot be funded using state bonds. To address this need, the state provides a General Fund match for selected county courthouse projects to cover replacement planning and feasibility costs in the early stages of the projects, prior to a request to provide state bond matching funding for the construction phases.

The legislature created the Oregon Courthouse Capital Construction Improvement Fund (OCCCIF) to make this funding available for courthouse replacements. Projects must meet specific criteria. Counties must provide matching funds for OCCCIF projects and work with circuit courts to develop and submit requests to the Association of Oregon Counties (AOC) Court Facilities Task Force, which makes recommendations to the Chief Justice.

This is an excellent example of state-county partnership, as OJD and AOC work together each biennium to facilitate a prioritization process to determine which county projects should be at the head of the line to receive available funding. Through this collaborative process, the Washington County courthouse was selected to be included in Policy Option Package 118 of the [Chief Justice's Recommended Budget for the 2025-27 Biennium](#).

The Washington County courthouse is a historic structure comprised of two phases – the smaller 1912 wing and the larger 1928 addition. The courthouse retains much of its original historic detail and character on the exterior, with the notable exception of the original windows being replaced with single panels of glass. The building appears to be concrete frame construction with masonry infill. Based on the historic performance of concrete frame buildings of this vintage and the location in this region of high seismicity, the Washington County courthouse would be expected to suffer extensive damage that could make restoring the building unfeasible, and the building may need to be demolished.

In addition to addressing this seismic deficiency, a new courthouse also would create space for additional judges and staff needed to meet community needs. Between 1980 and 2025, Washington County, Oregon, experienced significant population growth. In 1980, the county's population was approximately 145,000. Washington County's population rose by 1.1% year-to-year and 1.7% since 2020, to hit an estimated 611,272 last year. In absolute terms, Washington County gained the most new residents of any Oregon county in 2024 – 6,441 newcomers in all. Case filings have also been steadily increasing, rising from 22,314 total case filings in 2020 to 31,930 in 2024.

OJD appreciates the recent investments in judicial capacity for Washington County that the legislature has made, adding two judge positions. Despite those additions, OJD's judicial workload study shows that the Washington County Circuit Court needs five more judges just to meet existing filings, primarily from felony and civil case filings. Overall case filings in 2024 have exceeded pre-pandemic levels. Between 2023 and 2024, there were double-digit increases in case filings in civil, landlord-tenant, felony, misdemeanor, adoption, and civil commitment cases.

A new courthouse would promote more efficient court operations, including for jurors and witnesses, as there are long distances to travel between different parts of the current courthouse. A new courthouse would also allow for the creation of trauma-informed spaces for victims of crime, ADA-compliant court access, and design that addresses safety concerns for courthouse staff and the public.

Thank you for your time and the opportunity to provide this testimony. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.