

Submitter: Thomas Hanrahan
On Behalf Of: Private Investigators on OPDC cases
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee
On Public Safety
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB5031

The current inadequate rate of pay for private investigators significantly exacerbates the current, and chronic, public defense crisis in Oregon. Experienced and motivated investigators are the most crucial part of a criminal defense team. Investigators commonly asked to complete the most difficult tasks/duties in support of a criminal defendant. This includes seeking witnesses, or evidence, in unsafe places and contacting potentially unsafe individuals. Attorneys rely on experienced investigators to exercise their discretion as they work on the case. And, experienced investigators are essential to developing a positive and trusting relationship with clients.

The difficult work conditions and the low pay discourages qualified and dedicated investigators from working on OPDC cases over the long term. As with the churning of public defenders the churning of investigators impact effective criminal defense everyday. While adequate pay is but one tool it is an essential tool needed to insure that a defendant will receive an adequate investigator which impacts the extent to which a defendant will receive an adequate defense.

The increase sought, \$20 p/hr, is a modest proposal in light of the benefit it provides. As you, the legislature, struggle to find a solution to the public defense crisis you can this small step is an excellent first step.

thanks for your time.

T Hanrahan