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Joint Subcommittee on Public Safety  
Oregon State Legislature  
Via Written Testimony Submission Form

Re: In Support of a Stable Investigator Work Force  
HB 5031

Co-Chairs Broadman and Evans, members of the committee,

We write as criminal defense attorneys working in Oregon. We often have investigators who are paid through the Oregon Public Defense Commission. We write to urge you to not only support the increase in the rate paid to public defense investigators included in POP 104 of the OPDC proposed budget, but to support the implementation of that rate change effective July 2025. (As opposed to January 2026.)

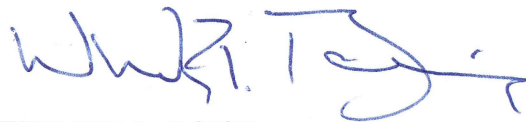
As you know, Oregon's criminal justice system is compromised by the ongoing public defense crisis. As late as February 2025, around 4,000 charged individuals still do not have counsel. Obviously, securing counsel is a priority, but the focus on counsel has often overlooked a hidden workforce deficit in public defense: legal investigators. The investigator workforce is dwindling because of inadequate pay. A lack of available legal investigators exacerbates the existing attorney deficit, contributing to higher costs and less desirable case outcomes. The ability to recruit and retain skilled investigators is vital to solving the public defense crisis.

We strongly urge legislators to support POP 104 and raise the investigator hourly rate to \$75 effective July 2025.

Sincerely,



KENDRA M. MATTHEWS



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