

Submitter: Tara Herivel
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee
On Public Safety
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB5031

Tara Herivel
Attorney

March 19, 2025

In Support of a Stable Investigator Work Force

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

I am a public defense attorney working in Oregon.

I am writing to ask you to support the increase in the rate paid to public defense investigators included in POP 104 of the OPDC proposed budget, and to support rapid implementation of the rate change, making it effective in July of 2025.

As you know, Oregon's criminal justice system is compromised by the ongoing public defense crisis. As of February 20th there are approximately 4,000 unrepresented individuals in the state.

The state's response to this dilemma has focused on increasing the number of available attorneys. While more attorneys are needed, this response has 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.

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

Sincerely,

Tara Herivel