



Support HB 5031 – POP 104 - Investigator Pay

Co-Chair Broadman, Co-Chair Evans, and members of the Joint Subcommittee on Public Safety,

We are members of the Multnomah County Democrats' Criminal Justice Study Group and we support HB 5031, specifically the Policy Option Package 104 and the increase in investigator pay. We would urge this Committee to implement this rate change to \$75/hour for investigators as effective July 2025.

A big part of Oregon's indigent defense crisis is the lack of experienced investigators willing to work on court-appointed cases. There are two reasons for this:

- 1) the historically low rate of pay, and
- 2) the 5-6 weeks it takes Oregon Public Defense Commission to pay investigators after they have submitted their invoices for completed work.

In 1985 investigators were paid \$25/hour. The equivalent of that rate today is \$75/hour. The current rate is \$55/hour.

Investigators don't submit invoices for a case until the case is closed or they have exhausted the pre-authorized hours for that case. Meaning, once you receive pre-authorization, you may not submit an invoice for that authorization for several months. Yet still, once that invoice is submitted, it will take 5-6 weeks for OPDC to pay that invoice. Imagine trying to run a small business as a private investigator with an almost 2-month lag between a submitted invoice and payment on that invoice.

Investigators play a critical role in criminal cases: reviewing discovery, locating and interviewing witnesses and potential evidence, and assisting attorneys during trial. This is especially critical and necessary work on the more serious felony cases, such as Ballot Measure 11 offenses and murder cases. An experienced and well-trained investigator can locate a key witness or piece of evidence that not only ensures there is a constitutionally adequate defense for the accused, it also helps ensure a just outcome.

Thus, recruiting and retaining investigators at \$75/hour is a key component to resolving the public defense crisis in Oregon. Please support the rate change for investigators and please implement this rate change effective July 2025. Further delays only contributes to a worsening of the public defense crisis.

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