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To Whom It May Concern:

The Oregon Association of Licensed Investigators firmly supports POP 104 and decisively endorses the proposed increase in investigator pay. We expect this crucial rate increase to be implemented effective July 2025. Public defense investigators have suffered from significantly diminished compensation compared to 1985, especially when adjusted for inflation.

In 1985, investigators earned \$25 per hour, which is equivalent to \$75 per hour today. We rightfully demand to be restored to the pay rate that reflects our worth and the critical role we play in the public defense system. The current low compensation is a major barrier to recruiting and retaining qualified investigators.

Raising this rate will not only help us keep our experienced team but also attract the new talent that is essential to meet the growing demands of public defense. When investigators are in short supply, attorneys are forced to take on tasks that should be performed by professionals, driving up costs and limiting their ability to take on more cases.

Expanding our investigator workforce will ensure that vital tasks are handled efficiently and economically, benefiting the entire legal process. Effectively addressing the public defense crisis in Oregon requires our ability to recruit and retain skilled investigators. Any delay in this rate increase, even by six months, would critically undermine our efforts to resolve this pressing issue. We call for the immediate implementation of this vital rate change in July.

This decisive action will enable us to retain and hire qualified investigators and to offer the competitive benefits we need to attract the best talent. Together, we will strengthen public defense and ensure that the rights of those we serve are fully upheld.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Cristina Lougal