

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

Chair Broadman, Members of the Committee:

My name is Dawn Krantz, and I am a criminal defense investigator with 20 years of experience in public defense.

Oregon's public defense crisis has left 4,000 people without access to their constitutional right to legal representation. Current efforts focus on hiring and retaining public defense attorneys are critical to fixing the problem.

As investigators, we do work that, if not done by us, must be done by attorneys. When there aren't enough investigators, attorneys must take on investigative work themselves—driving up costs and limiting the number of cases they can handle.

We struggle to recruit and retain investigators at the current rate. Many experienced investigators are leaving for federal work which pays nearly double or for private practice, where they earn \$150–\$175 per hour. The current rate for defense investigators is 1/3 less than what it was in 1985 when adjusted for inflation.

A rate increase of \$75 per hour is essential to retaining and attracting skilled professionals and ending the public defense crisis. By attracting and retaining investigators at an industry-appropriate rate, Oregon will spend less money on attorneys while allowing them to take more cases.

I urge you to pass this increase and make it effective in July 2025 to prevent further delays in eliminating the backlog of unrepresented defendants awaiting representation.

Thank you.