



NATIONAL COUNCIL OF INVESTIGATION & SECURITY SERVICES

The National Voice of the Private Investigation & Security Professions

PO Box 200615, Evans, CO 80620

president@nciss.org | (800) 445-8408 | www.NCISS.org

Joint Committee on Ways and Means
Subcommittee on Public Safety
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court Street NE, Room H-178
Salem, Oregon 97301

March 19, 2025

RE: Written Testimony in Support of HB 5031 - Investigator Pay Increase Provisions in the Oregon Public Defense Commission (OPDC) Budget

Dear Committee Members:

My name is Edward Ajaeb, and I am the President of the National Council of Investigation and Security Services (NCISS), a national association representing professional investigators and security professionals. I am also a resident of Oregon and a licensed Oregon private investigator.

I am writing today to express NCISS's strong support for provisions within HB 5031 which increase the rate of pay for public defense investigators; specifically, the proposed increase in investigator pay to \$75 per hour.

As president of NCISS and owner of an Oregon-based investigative firm myself, I have seen firsthand how increasing pay rates can directly lead to increased capacity, improved investigative outcomes, and enhanced case management. Implementation of the pay increase will empower investigative firms like mine to commit more resources to thorough and diligence investigations, expand investigative capacity, and take on more public defense cases—thus directly contributing to improving Oregon's broader public defense initiatives.

While we greatly appreciate and support the recognition of the critical role investigators play within Oregon's public defense system, we urge the legislature to implement this necessary pay increase effective July 2025, rather than delaying until January 2026.

Investigators in public defense have experienced significant wage stagnation over the past four decades. To put this into perspective, investigators in 1985 earned approximately \$25 per hour, which equates to roughly \$75 per hour today when adjusted for inflation. The current rate severely undervalues our profession and inhibits our ability to recruit and retain qualified investigators and dedicate the necessary resources and overhead to effectively manage cases. By

implementing the increase in pay sooner, Oregon will not only correct decades-long compensation inequity but also immediately alleviate pressing workforce and resource shortages.

The low pay rate for public defense investigators has directly contributed to recruitment and retention difficulties. This shortage compels attorneys to undertake investigative tasks, thereby reducing their efficiency, increasing costs, limiting their capacity to handle additional cases, and taking already-limited legal resources away from effective case and client representation. Providing fair and competitive compensation will attract new talent to public defense and encourage experienced investigators to remain in the profession, ultimately enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of Oregon's public defense system.

As president of our profession's national association, I am proud that Oregon has this unique opportunity to lead the nation by proactively addressing this critical element of public defense investigation reform. Implementation delays will only prolong the current challenges and forego desperately needed improvements. For the benefit of the entire public defense system—and ultimately the citizens relying upon it—we respectfully ask that the committee support an implementation date of July 2025.

On behalf of professional investigators in Oregon and across the nation, I thank you for your consideration and for your continued dedication to strengthening our state's public defense and judicial system.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'E. Ajaeb', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Edward J. Ajaeb

President,
National Council of Investigation & Security Services