

Submitter: William Thomson

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee  
On Public Safety

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB5031

I strongly urge Oregon lawmakers to support increased wages for private investigators contracted through indigent defense funding. As a public defender, the investigators that I hire are invaluable. They are "force multipliers" that do not just add to my capacity, but multiply it. They are essential to my ability to represent clients to a constitutionally zealous standard. In my office, we used to joke that the only cases that had good outcomes were the ones that we had investigators working on.

Oregon is suffering from a crisis of defense representation for indigent defendants. Lawmakers would be hard pressed to find a more efficient way to allocate resources to ameliorate this crisis, because even at a higher rate of pay, investigators are still cheaper than attorneys, and as noted above, they do more than just supplement attorney efficacy, they multiply it.