

Meagan A. Flynn  
Chief Justice



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## OREGON SUPREME COURT

March 20, 2025  
*Submitted Electronically*

The Honorable Anthony Broadman, Co-Chair  
The Honorable Paul Evans, Co-Chair  
Joint Committee on Ways and Means  
Subcommittee on Public Safety  
900 Court Street NE  
H-178 State Capitol  
Salem, OR 97301-4048

Re: HB 5031

Dear Co-Chair Broadman and Co-Chair Evans:

During this week dedicated to honoring the service of public defenders, we write to emphasize our gratitude to those who do this challenging work, for their dedication and for the critical role they play in our system of justice. We also write on behalf of the Oregon Judicial Branch to express our support for sustainable funding for the Oregon Public Defense Commission (OPDC).

The right to counsel is a cornerstone of our justice system, but its practical fulfillment depends on a well-functioning system of public defense. Without it, the timely administration of justice is compromised, increasing delays and worsening outcomes for not just those charged with crime, but for victims, witnesses and the community as a whole.

A properly functioning public defense system ensures not just the timely but also the just resolution of cases. When public defenders are overburdened or unavailable, the resolution of cases slows or halts, creating a ripple effect that strains judicial, law enforcement, and other resources and increases downstream costs through all other providers. This is costly, not only in financial terms but also in the loss of faith in the integrity of Oregon's criminal justice system.

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Public defenders provide a critical service under challenging circumstances. Their dedication and skill contribute directly to the efficiency of our courts, ensuring that cases are handled thoroughly, expeditiously, and most importantly, fairly. Without sufficient support, however, even Oregon's most capable and experienced public defenders cannot meet the demands their vocation requires.

A public defense delivery system that offers competitive compensation, training, and reasonable oversight of public defenders is a backbone of our system of justice. The OPDC therefore has been entrusted with a critical role in ensuring that Oregon's public defense services are administered in a manner that is effective and efficient, as well as accountable and transparent. The commission continues to make strides in these areas, through improved data collection and analysis. Continued development is a practical necessity to support the constitutional imperative for public defense.

We urge the legislature to provide the resources and direction necessary to ensure representation for all financially qualified individuals. Oregon's public defense services are a critical part of Oregon's justice system. We appreciate your commitment to ensuring that Oregon's criminal justice system functions efficiently, fairly, and effectively for all who depend on it, and we will continue to offer our support and constructive participation in that effort.

Sincerely,



Meagan A. Flynn  
Chief Justice



Nancy J. Cozine  
State Court Administrator

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