



WASHINGTON COUNTY CIRCUIT COURT

Oregon Judicial Department

March 20, 2025

RE: Support for HB 3180

Dear Chair Krofp, Vice-Chairs Chotzen and Wallen, and Members of the Committee:

This letter is in support of HB 3180, the first of many critical steps necessary for the planning and construction of a new courthouse in Washington County. Our current facility does not meet the needs of the people who use the Court in this county.

I would like to give you my perspective as a judge who works in the current Courthouse buildings.

I am the second "newest" Judge in Washington County. I was appointed to the Bench in January 2024. I am known around the Courthouse as the "shopping cart Judge." I do not have my own courtroom or chambers. My staff and I are reduced to taking what we need for our daily dockets in court, to which ever courtroom we are assigned via a hand cart. My staff uses what looks like a large plastic box on wheels while I use a "librarian's cart."

My nickname—Shopping Cart Judge—was given to me by one of the staff in the Courthouse. I find this nickname charming, but a charming nickname does not solve my very practical problems—I was appointed to help resolve civil and criminal cases in this county. Without access to a courtroom, I cannot resolve any matter that requires the preservation of a record for appellate purposes. Without the ability to discharge my duties as a judge, my current dockets are languishing and new cases are getting backed up.

Not having my own courtroom also creates a host of tangential problems, the most serious of which is not being able to satisfy an in-custody criminal defendant's constitutional right to a "speedy trial." As you know, the right to a speedy trial is guaranteed under the Oregon and US Constitutions. In Oregon, an in-custody criminal defendant must go to trial within 60-days of the date of arraignment. If this 60-day deadline cannot be met, the defendant must be released from custody. There is no practical solution to this problem within my case load. I have too many cases and no space within which to transact court business. And I cannot simply pass off my file to another judge who is equally busy.

One of the benefits of being a nomadic judge is that I have had an opportunity to preside over matters in all but two courtrooms in our Courthouse. All the various courtrooms present interesting challenges. For example, in one courtroom, depending on which table the lawyer uses, that lawyer will not be able to see the person in the witness box. Another courtroom is so small that the jury box cannot accommodate 12 jurors so chairs are placed in the well (in front of the six-chair jury box) so a felony trial can be conducted. We have a courtroom that does not have a jury room at all. Most of our jury boxes are not navigable for people with physical disabilities, who use crutches or use a wheel chair or electric

scooter. Some courtrooms have oil stains on the wall where jurors have rested their heads over the years. In some chambers, the seal around the window has failed so badly that one can easily pass a pencil through the hole where the seal is missing. And the railing around the staircases on the old side of the Courthouse are so low that someone of average height could very easily fall over the railing, should their hand slip. In short, the Washington County Courthouse cannot hide its age or warts any longer.

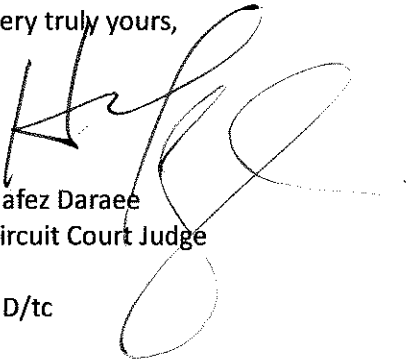
The final point I wish to make is a practical one—construction costs will never be cheaper than they are right now. It is in the nature of construction for costs to increase year over year. Even if one assumes a very modest 5% annual increase in the cost of labor and material related to a construction project, over a five-year period, that amounts to a 25% increase from the first year to the fifth. Of course, if the costs increase by more than 5% annually, the fiscal impact on this project would be tremendous.

I respectfully request your support for HB 3180.

If you would like additional information on any of my statements, or even a private tour of our courthouse, please do not hesitate to contact me directly.

Thank you for taking the time to read this statement.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Hafez Daraee', written over a large, faint circular watermark or stamp.

Hafez Daraee
Circuit Court Judge

HD/tc