

Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 1175

March 24, 2025

Chair Prozanski, Vice Chair Thatcher, Members of the Committee:

For the record my name is Avery Pickard and I am a Legislative Attorney for the Oregon State Bar. The mission of the bar is to serve justice and the public interest by promoting respect for the rule of law, by improving the quality of legal services, and by increasing access to justice.

In service to that access to justice component of our mission, the bar supports Senate Bill 1175 to establish a task force that will study and make recommendations to improve Oregon's jury system. The task force will examine various barriers to jury service, including importantly jury compensation and how it impacts jury participation.

The right to a trial by jury is a keystone of the state's judicial system, and the role of jurors is essential to that system. Juries promote fairness within the justice system, support accountability, and increase civic knowledge of our form of government.

Unfortunately, jury participation is on the decline across Oregon. A key data point indicates that the percentage of requests for excusal has increased by 16% yearly since 2017. It is important to come together to understand and address the most significant barriers to jury service in order to promote equitable, informed, and engaged civic participation.

We recognize the Oregon Judicial Department's leadership in proposing and supporting the work of the task force effort proposed by Senate Bill 1175 and look forward to being involved in finding solutions.

We urge your aye vote.