

TINA KOTEK
GOVERNOR



April 21, 2025

The Honorable Jason Kropf
The Honorable Willy Chotzen
The Honorable Kim Wallan
House Committee on Judiciary
900 Court St NE
Salem, OR 97301

Re: Testimony on Senate Bill 1175, Introduced – Support

Dear Chair Kropf, Vice Chair Chotzen, Vice Chair Wallan, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on SB 1175, which proposes the establishment of a Task Force on Removing Barriers to Jury Service. Equal access to justice is a fundamental tenant of our democracy. While justice is a right – not a privilege, the health of our justice system depends on the participation of everyday Oregonians as jurors. Juries should reflect a broad spectrum of community values and perspectives to ensure that litigants are judged in an equitable manner. Through jury service, Oregonians play a crucial role in maintaining the integrity of the legal system and ensuring that justice is served with accountability and transparency.

The importance of jury service is not matched by the stipend provided to jurors. Compensation minimums are set in statute at \$10 a day for the first two days and \$25 a day for subsequent days. Individual jurisdictions can set higher rates, but nowhere is it enough to cover the cost of missing a day of work, childcare, and/or travel expenses for jurors whose employers do not pay them for work time missed due to jury service. Financial hardship is a barrier to jury participation. The Oregon Judicial Department (OJD) reports that requests for excusal from jury service have increased by 16% yearly since 2017. More striking, is that the percentage of people who failed to attend without an excused absence increased from 24% in 2022 to 32% in 2024. If nearly one third of Oregonians called to jury service do not go, are our state's litigants being served by juries of their peers? Diverse juries bring multiple perspectives to the process which leads to fair, balanced, and credible decision making.

The OJD is committed to increasing jury participation and improving the jury service experience. SB 1175 is part of this effort. The bill will create a short-term, 15-member task force that will focus on: jury compensation, improving juror participation levels, and public education and outreach strategies. SB 1175 will be a wholistic three branch effort to improve outcomes. The OJD will staff the task force (with current staffing, no additional funds are being requested) and work to implement task force recommendations. The Governor, Senate President, Speaker of the House, and Chief Justice of the Supreme Court will each appoint members of the task force. By passing this bill and signing it into law, the legislative and executive branches will show their

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support for this three-branch endeavor to reduce barriers to jury service. As Governor Kotek's Equity and Racial Justice Director and Executive Appointments Director we endorse and encourage the passage of SB 1175.

Sincerely,

Andre Bealer, Equity and Racial Justice Director, Office of Governor Kotek
Maya Crawford Peacock, Executive Appointments Director, Office of Governor Kotek