



**Testimony in Support of Senate Bill HB 3825A
Before the Senate Judiciary Committee**

April 30th, 2025

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

On behalf of the Oregon Law Center (OLC), thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony in strong support of House Bill 3825A, which would remit fines and fees associated with old convictions for violations of now-repealed municipal and local ordinances prohibiting the possession of less than an ounce of marijuana.

OLC's mission is to achieve justice for low-income communities in Oregon by providing a full range of the highest quality civil legal services. The vast majority of our clients have incomes at or below the federal poverty level, and work hard to provide basic necessities for themselves and their families. Old fines and fees associated with judgments of conviction for actions that are no longer against the law are holding our clients back from moving on in their lives.

Background:

Possession of less than one ounce of marijuana was legalized in Oregon in 2015. The governor commuted sentences, including fines and fees associated with those judgments, for tens of thousands of Oregonians.

However, state actions did not affect *local or municipal* convictions or sentences. Thus, although many local laws prohibiting possession of less than an ounce of marijuana were formally repealed in 2015 and 2016, there remain many outstanding judgments for fines or fees associated with those convictions, for an offense that is no longer against the law. This is a predicament peculiar to people who were convicted at the local level, while those with state convictions for this offense received relief.

These debts create significant burdens to individuals. The debts are all 10 years old or more, and almost all have gone to collections. That negatively impacts credit scores, affecting opportunities for loans, housing, and more. At the same time, collections data show that court debt that old has such a low rate of return that it is widely considered uncollectible. The debts also prevent people from expunging convictions. Communities of color are particularly impacted. Conviction rates under this offense were twice as high in many local jurisdictions as compared to white Oregonians.

Passage of HB 3825A would provide the same relief to those convicted at the local level as was already provided to people who were convicted at the state level. Passage of this bill is one stamm step in moving Oregon towards a more just and equitable society. For these reasons, we urge your support. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.