



**Washington County District Attorney's Office**  
**Multnomah County District Attorneys' Office**



May 12, 2025

RE: Support for HB 2614

Dear Chair Prozanski, Vice-Chair Thatcher, and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee:

As the elected district attorneys for Oregon's two most populous counties, our courthouses account for over 15,000 filed criminal cases annually and include approximately 45% of Oregon's unrepresented defendant population.

We have watched with great frustration as Oregon's public defense system has failed to ensure indigent defendants charged with crimes receive attorneys in a timely manner. This breakdown harms defendants who are denied an attorney, to victims who are denied a day in court, and communities who are denied an opportunity to address crime.

We believe this crisis requires urgent action and that any solution must provide immediate relief on day one to ensure indigent defendants are represented by attorneys.

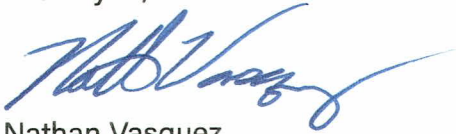
HB 2614 is an important step toward a solution. It includes many changes that we have advocated for and support, including placing OPDC within the purview of the Department of Administrative Services, clarifying that defense standards are subject to the requirements of the Oregon and United States Constitution, providing the governor's office with greater authority to appoint and remove the OPDC executive director, and ensuring consortia public defenders remain part of the solution.

While we applaud these changes, we also believe additional steps are needed this legislation session to reach a solution. This includes reforms such as allowing defense attorneys with sufficient experience and capacity to exceed current caseload limits with appropriate compensation, ensuring defense firms that receive state funding meet caseload expectations, and providing judges with the legal framework and tools to locate and appoint attorneys.

These additional steps can be accomplished through legislation or the budget note process. Additionally, OPDC has the power right now to make several important changes through the contracting process. We are agnostic regarding how these changes are implemented (e.g. legislation, budget notes, or contracting). However, we

strongly believe these changes must occur to reach our shared goal of a functioning indigent defense system.

Thank you,



Nathan Vasquez  
Multnomah County District Attorney



Kevin Barton  
Washington County District Attorney