

Youth, Rights & Justice

ATTORNEYS AT LAW

To: House Committee on Judiciary, 2013 Oregon Legislature

From: Mark McKechnie, Executive Director

Date: April 9, 2013

Re: Support for HB 3463 – Graphs Showing Salary Disparity for Public Defenders

Chair Barker and Members of the Committee:

We very much appreciate the Judiciary Committee for holding a hearing on the problem of public defender compensation. We also appreciate Representatives Williamson, Tomei, Hicks and Garrett for co-sponsoring HB 3463, along with Rep. Greenlick.

The attached graphs demonstrate the serious and worsening disparity in salaries that exists between attorneys who work for our organization representing children, youth and parents in juvenile court cases, as compared to the Assistant District Attorneys in Multnomah County who appear on the same juvenile dependency and delinquency cases.

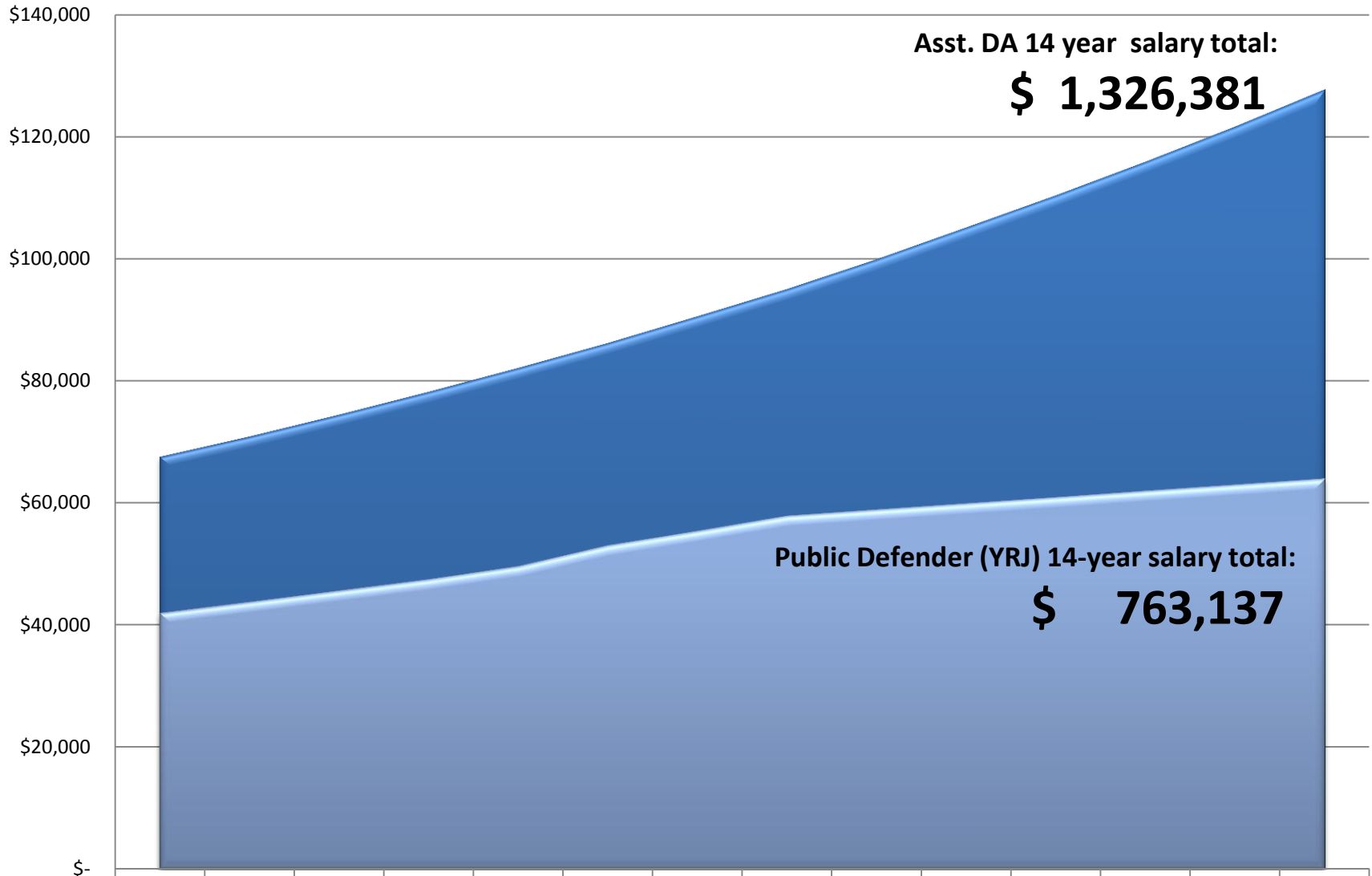
Both positions require a law degree and admission to the Oregon State Bar. The first chart shows the difference in salary at each level between a YRJ attorney and Assistant District Attorney for the first 14 years of employment. The pay scales used were effective July 1, 2012 for the District Attorney's office and January 1, 2013 for Youth, Rights & Justice.

The average student loan of an student finishing law school now is \$125,000. These loans also carry higher interest rates than other types of loan interest rates, which have reached historic lows. The second chart reflects the percentage of an attorney's gross annual income (based upon the salary scales in the first chart) that is required to make payments on a student loan with an initial balance of \$125,000 and a 25-year term. You can see that new public defense attorneys would need to pay nearly a quarter of their gross salary in student loan payments and that one of our attorneys would still be paying a higher percentage of her or his gross salary in student loan payments after 14 years than an Assistant DA would pay in his or her first year.

These disparities pose obvious problems for organizations like Youth, Rights & Justice when it comes to recruiting and retaining qualified attorneys.

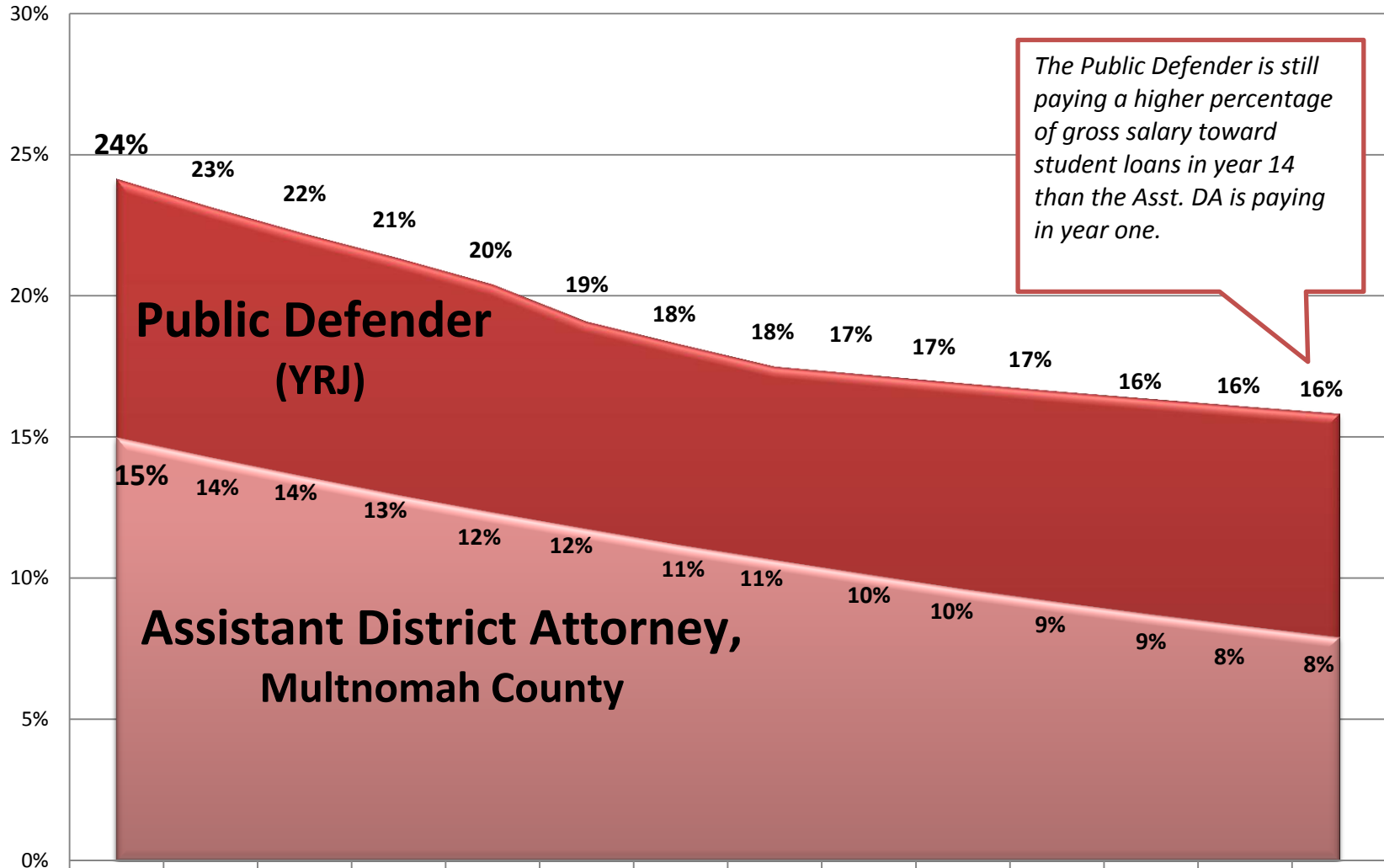
We will refer to these charts in our testimony on Tuesday.

Comparison of Prosecutor and Public Defender Payscales, Steps 1-14



	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 5	Step 6	Step 7	Step 8	Step 9	Step 10	Step 11	Step 12	Step 13	Step 14
■ Asst DA	\$67,604	\$70,929	\$74,493	\$78,249	\$82,148	\$86,239	\$90,616	\$95,090	\$99,946	\$105,16	\$110,42	\$115,95	\$121,71	\$127,81
■ YRJ Staff Atty	\$41,932	\$43,743	\$45,604	\$47,466	\$49,603	\$53,040	\$55,386	\$57,849	\$58,869	\$59,889	\$60,909	\$61,929	\$62,949	\$63,969

Average Percentage of *Student Loan Payments to Gross Salary*, Years 1-14 (based upon \$125,000 debt and 25-year loan term)



The Public Defender is still paying a higher percentage of gross salary toward student loans in year 14 than the Asst. DA is paying in year one.

■ YRJ Staff Atty	24%	23%	22%	21%	20%	19%	18%	18%	17%	17%	17%	16%	16%	16%
■ Asst DA	15%	14%	14%	13%	12%	12%	11%	11%	10%	10%	9%	9%	8%	8%