



Oregon District Attorneys Association, Inc.

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Oregon Legislative Assembly
78th Regular Session

*RE: Child Support System Modernization
Department Of Justice – Policy Option Package 161*

Dear Senators and Representatives:

The Oregon District Attorneys Association (ODAA) supports the request of the Oregon Department of Justice for funding required for the modernization of the Child Support System.

Twenty-six District Attorney offices partner with the Department of Justice Division of Child Support to form the Oregon Child Support Program. Currently, the program relies on one of the oldest computer systems in the nation. It is an antiquated, brittle mainframe computer system based on COBOL programming. Our district attorney family support offices use this system to perform the daily business necessary to serve the families in those respective counties.

Child support is one of the nation's top four anti-poverty programs for children. Hundreds of thousands of Oregon families depend on timely delivery of services to meet their basic needs. Delays in establishing or delivering child support services strain already limited community resources. These impacts are especially noticeable in rural counties where high unemployment rates increase a family's dependence on child support services.

To operate a child support program, states are required to maintain a child support automated system that meets federal certification requirements. As technology progresses and the demands on the system have changed, the Program has struggled to meet those requirements. Each change made to this inflexible system often brings unintended consequences that directly impact the families we serve.

In 2012, the Child Support System experienced numerous failures, all of which were the unanticipated result of fixes or upgrades to unrelated programs within the automated system or due to demands that the system's antiquated database could not meet. Each of these system failures strain state and county resources. The Program's operating expenses are shared proportionately among the District Attorney family support and Division of Child Support offices. Program costs increase each time a system issue occurs: system programming must be rewritten, cases corrected, and erroneous public notices reissued accurately. State and District Attorney staff time is redirected from daily services to contact customers or correct errors and often a "work around" must be incorporated into daily processes, all of which increases the time needed to meet the basic needs of families.

Doug Harclerod, Executive Director

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Production decline not only impacts families, but results in a reduced ability to compete for federal incentive dollars, which are awarded annually based on performance. The Program earned \$6,238,714 in incentives for federal fiscal year 2011 (the most current year awarded); of this, \$884,970 was distributed directly to the 26 district attorney family support offices participating in the Program.

The Program not only relies on the system to collect and distribute more than \$1 million in child support each day, but also on the accuracy of the information it retains. The data extracted from the system is used to prepare federally mandated reports, pass data reliability audits, and maintain a federally certified system. This data is essential for the state and counties to receive the maximum amount of federal incentives and avoid financial penalties. Failure to pass data reliability may exclude the Program from receiving incentives. Falling below federal performance benchmarks or failing to meet data reliability audits would result in the loss of federal incentive dollars that counties depend on for funding their district attorney family support offices. If funding decreases, district attorney family support offices would no longer be able to provide support services to the families that depend on them.

District Attorney offices throughout Oregon are committed to providing our constituents with professional, accurate, and timely service. Our offices rely on the child support system to meet the needs of families in our local areas. The functionality of the system impacts our ability to provide essential services, and the system's performance and accuracy has a direct financial impact on the funding for our offices.

Please support the modernization of Oregon's child support system, and vote in favor of the Department of Justice Policy Option Package 161.

Very truly yours,



Timothy Colahan
President
Oregon District Attorneys Association