

**Testimony of Hunter Emerick, Oregon State Bar Board of Governors  
in Support of HB 5016  
Before the Ways and Means Subcommittee on Public Safety  
March 20, 2013**

I am appearing today on behalf of the more than 14,000 active members of the Oregon State Bar to support full funding for the Oregon Judicial Department.

As you know, the judicial branch touches the lives of thousands of Oregonians every day. From supporting crime victims, to facilitating Oregon business and economic development, to resolving issues for families in crisis, Oregon courts are a critical part of what makes Oregon work. Our courts are involved in resolving disputes that may seem big or small from the outside. For those involved, however, each case is important.

We believe that strong courts help build strong communities. With that in mind, our concern at the Oregon State Bar is to make sure that Oregon's court system can operate as efficiently and effectively as possible. The courts have made great progress over the last two years in beginning implementation of the Oregon eCourt system, which will ultimately enable the court system to process cases more quickly and to do more with less.

But technology can only take us so far. The bulk of work moving thousands of cases through the courts each day is done by hundreds of dedicated employees at local courthouses. Our courts cannot run without their contribution.

Indeed, cuts to this workforce over the past four years have severely affected the courts' ability to perform its work in processing cases efficiently in a timely manner. This has meant delays for those accused of crimes, and also for crime victims, businesses, witnesses, jurors, and everyone else who conducts business in our courts.

Court staff makes it a priority to see to it that every Oregonian who passes through the courthouse door has as positive an experience as possible, given the circumstances. I encourage this committee to do everything you can when crafting the department's budget to ensure that our courts have the human and technological resources necessary to carry out their mission in an efficient and professional manner.

The bar is working with its members, the business community, community groups and current and former state leaders to establish the Citizens' Campaign for Court Funding, to provide ongoing advocacy for adequate funding for our court system. We invite you to join us and provide the courts with an adequate budget for the next biennium.

Thank you for your time and consideration.