

Dear Chair Barker and Members of the Committee:

Please accept my apologies for not attending the hearings on HB 4036. I have deep respect for the Committee and its on-going commitment to public safety. I have been engaged in compelling matters for the Marion County District Attorney, including a murder in Woodburn over the snow weekend, County presentations on marijuana, and personally attending the death investigation of the Honorable Judge Albin Norblad literally while you conducted your hearing on Monday, February 10th.

I support HB 4036, as I did HB 2024 last session. It is a solid concept, and as a felony, provides a better opportunity to hold violent individuals accountable for their behavior, while acknowledging the impact to victims. A comprehensive approach that ensures the safety of staff and patients is the best approach in my opinion. Certainly the felony concept better compliments the most recent commitment to contribute resources to our office in HB 5008. And finally, the bill aligns with other protections afforded to professionals in other unique fields. Everyone deserves to safe on the job.

I appreciate the resources dedicated to Marion County in HB 5008 last session. It allocates 200K to the Marion County District Attorney to prosecute violent offenses in the Oregon State Hospital. Since passage, I have worked closely with the Oregon State Hospital, the Oregon State Police, and the Marion County Sheriff to ensure an effective implementation of the resource. Last Wednesday, the Marion County Board of Commissioners adopted the Intergovernmental Agreement between our office and the Oregon State Hospital. Our office has been actively recruiting for an Deputy District Attorney to assist in fulfilling the IGA. Our collective objectives are to promote accountability for offenses, preserve the therapeutic efforts of the Hospital, and to continue to facilitate the invaluable relationships necessary to secure results.

I must tell you that we have developed tremendous, professional relationships with the Oregon State Hospital and the Oregon State Police, and have every confidence in their people.

I respectfully note that no resources were dedicated to the Oregon State Police to investigate these cases. Additionally, whether misdemeanors or felonies, there are difficult legal decisions to be made in these cases, and the cases must be carefully reviewed and prioritized. The resources are not a panoply, just a great opportunity to sharpen our effort.

I have been asked for numbers. I remain confident that the numbers of prosecutions will remain relatively low, for purposes of fiscal impact. I believe the best way to inform the Committee of the realistic dynamics of violence in the OSH would be careful consultation with the stakeholders. The Oregon State Hospital and the Oregon State Police are necessary in that effort.

Lastly, the parameters of HB 3194 gave me pause this session, and remain significant into the next general session. As I understand, the handshake to avoid sentencing reform in light of 3194 is palpable, and I wish to honor that understanding.

Sincerely and respectfully submitted, Walt Beglau, Marion County District Attorney