

HB 4134

Statement of Wheeler County Judge Patrick C. Perry

February 12, 2014

Good morning, Chair Gelser and members of the committee. For the record, I am Patrick C. Perry, Wheeler County Judge.

I am here this morning to speak to the proposed dash one amendment to HB 4134.

There are 14-hundred people living in Wheeler County. It is the smallest Oregon County in terms of population. That is a population base of less than one person per square mile.

We are one of four Oregon counties with a County Judge who has Juvenile Jurisdiction. As one of those County Judges, I am here to tell you that I understand what happens in my county and which programs best serve my constituents.

In particular, I understand the juveniles who end up appearing before me as the Juvenile Judge in Wheeler County. I work very closely with our Juvenile Director who uses the funds available from the State and Wheeler County for the programs to serve the high-risk youth of the county.

We have a school based counselor who serves three of the schools in my county. That counselor is the first line of defense. She tries to get to the root of the problem when a juvenile gets into trouble.

As a county that has retained its juvenile jurisdiction, we also retained the great cost of indigent defense and the cost of a juvenile judge and all the court costs. In addition, we have a judge who is local, not a hundred miles away, to deal with the cases.

Wheeler County needs this amendment so that we know there is certainty in the funding of our high-risk youth and intervention programs and the people who work with those programs in our communities.

While I am here speaking for Wheeler County, there are three other Oregon counties (Sherman, Gilliam and Morrow) that have the same concerns about the way their juvenile programs are going to be funded and what future they might face if this amendment is not included in the legislation. These four counties are all minimum allotment counties, which means we receive the fewest dollars to fund programs for our high-risk youth.

Please consider Wheeler County and the other small counties because we are different. We don't fit the template of the juvenile justice though out the rest of our state. With

our local connections to our communities, we are very sensitive to the needs of our families. Please let us continue to provide the services that work best for our counties.

Thank you for your consideration and I'll be happy to answer any of your questions.