

From the office of
Senator Richard Devlin

February 20, 2014

To: Senate Judiciary Committee

Hon. Floyd Prozanski, Chair
Hon. Betsy Close, Vice-Chair
Hon. Michael Dembrow
Hon. Jeff Kruse
Hon. Arnie Roblan

As former chairs of the House Judiciary committee, former Attorneys General, and a former Supreme Court Justice and Governor, we have spent our careers working to provide justice to all Oregonians – both access to justice and the fair imposition of justice. These two principles provide the foundation for the rule of law in our state.

These two principles also come together in HB 4143, which holds offenders accountable for their fraudulent actions while funding Legal Aid Services.

We strongly support HB 4143 and encourage you to pass the measure.

Throughout our personal and professional lives we have fought for consumers. As corporations grow and the pressure for profits increase, the voice of consumers is easily drowned out. HB 4143 guarantees that organizations that have been found at fault of fraud by a judge or jury are held accountable for their actions. It does not change the ground rules. It does not change the size or scope of the penalties. It does make sure consumers are adequately and fully protected.

We have also both fought for access to justice. Through the Campaign for Equal Justice and working directly with Legal Aid Services, we have invested great time and energy to help generate the resources and the workforce to provide low cost and no-cost legal services to some of our state's most vulnerable populations. It is inexcusable to let victims of domestic violence, victims of elder abuse, and other disadvantaged Oregonians suffer without adequate legal help. The services of Legal Aid can and do save the lives and the livelihoods of these citizens. With the endowment that will be created with HB 4143, it is virtually certain that Legal Aid can be expanded and enriched with no General Fund investment – a remarkable achievement.

You will face many difficult decisions in your careers. Voting yes on HB 4143 is not one of them. It is time for Oregon to join 48 other states in providing justice for consumers. It is time for Oregon to provide equal access to justice for all its citizens. It is time to pass HB 4143.

Sincerely,

Theodore R. Kulongoski

Hardy Myers