

**Testimony before House Judiciary Committee
On behalf of the Oregon State Bar**

February 4, 2015

Chair Barker and members of the committee:

My name is Helen Hirschbiel and I am an attorney in Tigard, Oregon with the Oregon State Bar. It is a pleasure to be here today and I welcome the opportunity to talk to you about the Oregon State Bar.

The Oregon State Bar

The Oregon State Bar (OSB) is a public corporation and an instrumentality of the judicial branch of the State of Oregon. The Oregon State Bar has nearly 15,000 active members. The bar licenses and disciplines lawyers and performs other functions to benefit the public. The bar does not receive any direct financial support in the form of taxpayer dollars from the general fund, but is funded entirely by member fees and revenue from various member service programs. The Executive Director of the bar oversees approximately 90 staff members not including the Professional Liability Fund.

Governance

The bar is administered by an 18 member volunteer Board of Governors. 14 of the members are lawyers; 4 are non-lawyers who are appointed based on their areas of interest and expertise. Attorney board members are elected by the membership from different regions of the state to ensure geographic diversity. The OSB House of Delegates (HOD) serves as the representative assembly of the membership, voting on proposed rules, fees and policies. It helps set policy direction for the bar. Composed of approximately 230 delegates, the HOD meets annually, and may occasionally convene for a special meeting on topics of importance.

Unique Traits

The Oregon bar is unique in a number of areas:

1. **Open Disciplinary System** - It is the only bar in the country which allows public access to disciplinary complaint files from the time the complaint is filed with the bar.
2. **Mandatory Malpractice Coverage** - It is the only bar in the nation that requires attorneys to have malpractice insurance and that has a self-insuring organization to provide that coverage, the Professional Liability Fund.
3. **Public Member Involvement** - The bar encourages public participation in all aspects of its operations. 4 of the 18 members of the board are public members. Public members also

participate throughout the Oregon lawyer discipline system. Non-lawyers sit on the State Professional Responsibility Board, local investigation committees, trial panels and Unlawful Practice of Law Committee.

4. **Lawyers Average 9 Hours a Month Pro Bono** - 41% of lawyers spend an average of 9.2 hours per month providing pro-bono legal services. This category of lawyers does not include those working for legal aid organizations or non-profit groups that provide legal services on a free or reduced fee basis. 2012 OSB Economic Survey.
5. **Campaign for Equal Justice** - Oregon is one of the few states that has developed a non-profit fundraising campaign to raise money from the legal community for legal services to the poor. Since 1991, CEJ has raised \$23 million for legal aid. This year the goal for the annual campaign is \$1.2 million.