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TO: Joint Ways and Means Committee, sub-committee on Public Safety

RE: HB 5514, relating to the financial administration of the Judicial Department

Co-Chairs Senator Shields and Representative Williamson and members of the sub-committee:

Lane County enjoys a close working relationship with the Lane County Circuit Court. The work we do together runs a wide gamut and ultimately provides the foundation for creating a safe and just community. In testimony from Chief Justice Balmer, you heard him touch on many of these programs and Lane County is in support of HB 5514 with one exception.

We draw your attention to section 7 of the measure, which outlines both the dollar amount of the appropriation for county family mediation and conciliation programs and the procedure for allocating those dollars to each county. This process for providing funding to counties for this important service was created in 2011 and came from the reform of court fees established by two bills, HB 2710 and 2712. Prior to the passage of these bills, the revenue for conciliation and mediation programs was established through a fee-setting process needing approval from both the local Presiding Judge and the Board of County Commissioners. In fact, Lane County had been through that very process to adjust a ten year old rate structure that was effective July 1, 2010. That process was replaced with this legislative appropriation, based on the actual revenue experience of counties during the 09-11 biennium.

The outcome of this process was that Lane County was essentially frozen into a revenue structure that left us with an allocation mostly representative of a ten year old revenue model. We took two important steps over the past four years to address this:

- Lane County was instrumental in passing two late session policies in both 2011 and 2013 to adjust the biennial appropriation such that we were able to transfer up to one-half of the appropriation for law libraries established in the OJD budget bill and use that revenue instead for family mediation and conciliation.
- We asked our Presiding Judge to consult with the Chief Justice, per the allocation language in the budget bill, which he was willing to do. Unfortunately, that consultation if acted upon would only serve to decrease every other county's allocation.

Lane County's law library can no longer afford to transfer one-half of its biennial appropriation without ceasing staffing of our law library, thus we ask the committee to undertake an effort to increase the appropriation found in section 7 of HB 5514 such that each county can sustain these important programs. Lane County's experience was that it re-appropriated approximately \$160,000 from the law library annually over the past two biennia.

SUBMITTED ELECTRONICALLY