

Chief Justice Thomas A. Balmer



Oregon Supreme Court

March 26, 2015

The Honorable Jeff Barker, Chair
House Judiciary Committee

Delivered electronically only

Dear Chair Barker:

I urge the House Judiciary Committee to give House Bill 2329 a do-pass recommendation and forward the bill to the Ways & Means Committee. Having a healthy and supported system of Legal Aid in Oregon is essential to providing effective access to justice in our state, and improves our courts' ability to efficiently adjudicate cases and provide an impartial forum to resolve disputes.

Legal Aid plays a critical role in our legal system, especially in cases involving domestic violence and family law matters where large numbers of parties are not represented by an attorney. These are cases where people are stressed and often vulnerable and fearful – situations where having an attorney by your side can change not only the outcome of the case but also the perception of justice that our state provides. Although courts are working to develop and implement interactive forms to assist self-represented litigants file documents and provide facilitators to further assist these unrepresented litigants, these efforts alone will not fill the void.

Increasing support for Legal Aid in Oregon is a necessary step in meeting our state's constitutional obligation to administer justice completely and without delay for all Oregonians. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'T Balmer'.

Thomas A. Balmer
Chief Justice