



# Oregon District Attorneys Association, Inc.

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March 8, 2017

TO: Senator Jackie Winters, Co-chair  
Representative Duane Stark, Co-chair  
Members of the Joint Public Safety Subcommittee

FROM: Rick Wesenberg, President, ODAA

RE: HB 5013 – Oregon Judicial Department budget

Access to justice is the cornerstone of a well-functioning community. Oregon's district attorneys support a well-funded, accessible judicial system. Beyond the core criminal justice function of the courts, to provide an impartial venue for determining the guilt or innocence of the accused, the Oregon Judicial Department works closely with prosecutors on a wide range of programs.

1. ODAA supports the courthouse improvement project

Oregon's district attorneys work daily with the Judicial Department. In most cases, they also work side by side in shared facilities. Many of Oregon's courthouses require significant improvements and/or need to be wholly rebuilt. Safe, accessible and adequately sized courthouses are critical to quality provision of services. ODAA recommends the committee strongly support the continued work of OJD to enhance the physical infrastructure of Oregon's justice system.

2. Alternative courts provide needed services to offenders and save state resources

Oregon's judges partner with district attorneys, community corrections and service providers to operate over eighty specialty courts. Drug courts, mental health courts, and veterans' courts are just a few of the programs that help divert qualified individuals out of the criminal justice system and into treatment programs and other associated services. Availability of these court programs results in reductions in use of jails, prisons, and the Oregon State Hospital. More importantly, they help keep families together and help modify behavior to reduce future victimization. The operation of treatment and specialty courts are dependent on adequate funding from a wide range of sources, including specialty court funding, justice reinvestment (JRI) funding and direct appropriations to

OJD. Discontinuing funding for these programs will almost certainly lead to increased costs throughout the criminal justice and human services systems.

3. Oregon bench must be adequately staffed and compensated

Oregonians reasonably demand access to timely, effective justice. To deliver on that expectation, OJD must be able to recruit a talented, experienced and diverse bench. There must also be sufficient members of the bench to address increasing workloads in many jurisdictions. ODAA encourages the legislature to support additional judicial positions and competitive salaries for judges.

As the committee considers how best to manage the difficult budget cuts required this biennium, Oregon's district attorneys believe it is imperative that the core functions of the courts are preserved and protected. Nothing is more vital to our state than timely access to justice.

Thank you for your consideration.