

OREGON TRIAL LAWYERS ASSOCIATION

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Testimony of Arthur Towers Before House Committee on Judiciary In Opposition to House Bill 2795 April 13, 2017

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. At this point, we oppose HB 2795, but are hoping it gets amended at some juncture in the legislative process.

Our organization strongly support for the Oregon Judicial Department's budget priorities.

The members of the Oregon Trial Lawyers Association fight for justice for all Oregonians. We fight for workers who face on-the-job discrimination or retaliation for whistleblowing. We fight for defrauded consumers who work hard and play by the rules. We represent Oregonians who pay their insurance premiums month after month, year after year, yet cannot collect when they are injured or suffer property damage at the hands of another.

Our members hold the medical industry accountable when negligent acts and corner cutting result in injury or death. Injured Oregonians rely on a functioning court system to get justice.

We also represent Oregonians traumatized by elder abuse, sexual abuse, or child abuse.

All the people we represent share a common challenge: Justice delayed is justice denied. An underfunded court system slows down the process. For example, if it takes years for an abuse victim's case to wind its way through the legal system, it becomes very difficult to get the closure and healing process underway.

Oregon courthouses are the place that the Davids whom we represent can be on a relatively equal footing with the Goliaths who have harmed them. At a time of intense competition for government resources and in a climate of deregulation and limited government, it is more important than ever to make sure that we keep a high-functioning, adequately funded judiciary.

The fee increase contemplated by HB 2795 puts more of the burden on the Davids. We understand that in the Ways and Means process that part of the increasing costs of the system could be spread among all the users of the system by assessing public sector users for some of the costs associated with their involvement. As that process occurs, we are open to further discussion on this issue.