

Oregon State Bar Testimony in Support of HB 2605

February 14, 2017

Ensuring access to justice for all Oregonians requires that cases make their way through the judicial process in a timely fashion. As Oregon's population continues to grow, so does the number of judicial filings and the overall workload placed on Oregon's court system.

In many counties, a major impediment to the movement of cases through our courts is an insufficient number of judges. As the number of judges in each county is established by statute, HB 2605 addresses this problem by authorizing a total of nine new judgeships spread out over eight different Oregon judicial districts.

Without an expectation that a case will make its way to a judge quickly, many would be litigants are forced to seek non-judicial solutions. This can be a particular problem in the business community where delays in resolving legal disputes can lead directly to monetary and employment losses. In criminal cases, the state is constitutionally required to prosecute crimes within a reasonable time. If an insufficient number of judges or court facilities makes it impossible to bring a case within that time, the state can be forced to dismiss the charges.

The Oregon State Bar supports taking the modest step put forth in HB 2605 toward bringing the number of judges in Oregon back in alignment with current caseloads.