

CIRCUIT COURT OF OREGON
ELEVENTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT
DESCHUTES COUNTY JUSTICE BUILDING
1100 NW BOND STREET
BEND, OREGON 97703
(541) 388-5300

A. MICHAEL ADLER, *Judge*
WELLS B. ASHBY, *Presiding Judge*
BETH M. BAGLEY, *Judge*

RAYMOND D. CRUTCHLEY, *Judge*
BETHANY P. FLINT, *Judge*
STEPHEN P. FORTE, *Judge*
WALTER M. MILLER, JR., *Judge*

January 22, 2019

Representative Jennifer Williamson, Chair
House Judiciary Committee
Oregon State Legislature
Salem, Oregon

RE: HB 2239 – Increasing the number of Circuit Court Judges in certain Judicial Districts

Chair Williamson and Members of the Committee:

As Presiding Judge of the 11th Judicial District, and on behalf of my fellow judges who serve the residents of Deschutes County, I urge you to pass HB 2239 out of Committee.

Like many Circuit Courts in our state, the Deschutes County Circuit Court's efforts to timely resolve disputes is severely hampered by the lack of necessary judge and staff positions. Should the legislature add an additional Judge to the 11th Judicial District, the Court would designate that Judge as a trial judge with several effects:

First, it would support the following efforts undertaken by the Court to improve outcomes and meet time standards in juvenile dependency cases:

- Maintaining an individual calendar system for dependency cases to ensure that a single judge hears all dependency matters, providing consistency for the families involved in these cases;
- Serving as a pilot site for the Differentiated Case Management project intended to reduce the number of children in care longer than two years; and,
- Establishing a set time each court day for shelter care hearings as part of the Oregon Judicial Department's efforts related to the budget note in HB 5006.

Second, it would increase the amount of judge time available to hear contested shelter care hearings and termination trials. Within the larger context of the Court's master calendar system, shelter care hearings and termination trials are set within the Court's

“trial rotations.” The Court is keenly aware that the current length of time to jurisdiction for both parents is not timely, primarily due to the Court’s inability to quickly set and hear contested shelter care hearings.

Finally, the addition of another trial judge would reduce the time to trial in criminal cases, which are currently being set out six months. In Deschutes County, this is increasingly creating a risk to public safety as cases, primarily DUII’s, approach statutory deadlines for trial and are in danger of being dismissed.

The Court appreciates your efforts to work with the Judicial Branch to improve the administration of justice in our state and support safe families and communities for our children.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'W. Ashby', written over a faint horizontal line.

Hon. Wells B. Ashby
Presiding Judge

Cc: Rep. Mike McLane
Rep. Cheri Helt
Rep. Jack Zika
Rep. Daniel Bonham
Sen. Tim Knopp
Sen. Dennis Linthicum
Sen. Cliff Bentz
Hon. Martha Walters, Chief Justice
Ms. Nancy Cozine, State Court Administrator
Judges of the 11th Judicial District