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The Honorable Representative Jennifer Williamson, Chair
House Judiciary Committee Members

Dear Chair Williamson and members of the committee,

I am writing on behalf of Public Defender Services of Lane County and OCDLA to express my strong support of HB 2400. I believe this legislation makes important changes to existing laws and is needed to make appellate procedure more consistent between criminal and civil commitment matters to allow a longer period of time for notice of appeals when certain factors are met.

Civil commitments are extremely time sensitive. My office frequently gets notice only one business day before a hearing, and it is always a mad rush to prepare, meet with the client, determine whether a setover is needed, determine if witnesses need to be called, and then defend the AMIP at hearing. Clients who are alleged to be mentally ill are in a unique position in this system - in every case, the only way the client could have been committed is if the Court found by clear and convincing evidence that the person was mentally ill, along with other findings. Therefore, it is unsurprising that there would be situations where the AMIP believed an appeal was to be filed, but at some point along the way, the information was either not conveyed successfully to the attorney, or the attorney failed to request the appeal within the usual 30 day period. Therefore, I would respectfully request that the legislature support these changes to the system.

Sincerely,

Brook Reinhard
Executive Director
Public Defender Services of Lane County