

April 1, 2019

To: The Honorable Jennifer Williamson, Chair; The Honorable Chris Gorsek, Vice-Chair; The Honorable Sherrie Sprenger, Vice Chair; Members of the House Judiciary Committee

From: Tricia Hedin

Re: House Bill 3224. To provide District Attorney Accountability

I am writing in support of HB 3224. I have worked as a legal assistant in the Oregon criminal justice system for 39 years. I know first hand the importance and impact the policies of the District Attorneys in Oregon have upon the fairness of our system. I also have seen the wide variation in unwritten and undisclosed policies that have historically been practiced in Oregon by District Attorneys.

It is time that District Attorney offices be made accountable to the Oregon taxpayers by requiring them to establish important policies around charging practices for adults and juveniles, alternative disposition programs, ethical standards (not just through the Oregon Bar), discovery practices, plea bargaining, release decisions and other important functions.

Also included in those policies should be statements of intent regarding the fair treatment of minority persons, immigrants, and juveniles.

Recently our local District Attorney in Lane County held a public forum in response to written questions that had been sent to her. There was a large turnout, which showed the interest the public has in District Attorney policies. There were many many questions put forth to the D.A., which attests to the lack of transparency which exists. It was difficult at times to listen to answers being given by the District Attorney and know that, while she might personally believe in those policies, the practices of some of her staff are not in line with them.

To require written policies would result in District Attorneys examining issues impacting their work and holding discussions among their staff, which could

include continuing education about the best practices currently developed to reduce crime in our communities and to address victim needs.

HB 3224 would be a step toward the transparency needed for voters to make decisions when electing District Attorneys and would make District Attorneys accountable to the people who elect them and pay their salaries.

I urge you to vote yes on HB 3224 and move it to a full House vote. Thank you for listening.

Sincerely,

Tricia Hedin
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