

Date: March 29, 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: Carter McKenzie, Nadia Telsey, Lori Bosteder, Rose Wilde, Ginny Osteen
Springfield-Eugene Showing Up for Racial Justice Core Leaders & Common Sense
Justice of Lane County Co-Conveners

My name is Rose Wilde and I represent Springfield-Eugene Showing Up for Racial Justice (SE-SURJ) and our Common Sense Justice for Lane County Committee (CSJ-LC). We support transparency and accountability improvements and oversight of our district attorney offices, including House Bill 3224.

Our organizations support this bill because we understand that district attorneys carry immense power in our criminal justice system, but lack oversight and transparency measures to allow community members and the legislature to monitor the just application of our laws. We also believe that our public justice systems should represent our values - our community's investments of taxes support these institutions and our government metes out justice in our names. And yet, most district attorney's offices fail to present their policies for implementing the core functions of their offices, and in some cases have not even articulated internally their approaches to justice.

As a result, voters lack basic information necessary for evaluating the performance of a district attorney or determining which candidates to select in elections. We also lack information to help us determine if our criminal justice system is effectively promoting community safety and preventing future crimes. In Lane County, our district attorney, for example, has clearly stated to several of us, contrary to recent brain research, that some youth are so irredeemable that charging them with Measure 11 crimes is the only way to ensure community safety. However, the district attorney has not articulated a policy to guide prosecutors when to charge youth as adults, as Measure 11 allows, and when to allow them access to juvenile courts, giving youth the opportunity to prove they have learned and changed and are ready to return safely to their communities. Furthermore, when we interviewed non-profits contracted to offer alternatives to incarceration, such as access to specialty courts (drug, mental health, veterans, youth peer court) or restorative justice programs, staff reported a concern that race, immigration status, and income influenced which people convicted of crimes received the opportunity to rehabilitate or repair the harms they had done - but without information about the policies or data regarding access to these programs, such concerns could not be grounded in evidence or policy. These are critical questions and we deserve answers - without needing to hire a research analyst to dig into mountains of records to find the answers.

The fact that district attorneys have not developed these policies or fail to share them with the public is deeply concerning, but HB 3224 provides a sensible remedy. It requires that DA offices develop policies around the core functions of their work, publish

them on their website, and update them every 5 years. These are reasonable requests that some DAs have already met without being required – unfortunately many have not. Springfield-Eugene Showing Up for Racial Justice and our affiliated group, Common Sense Justice for Lane County, thank you for considering this important bill and urge each of you to vote to pass HB 3224.

Respectfully submitted,

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SE-SURJ & CSJ-LC Co-Convener
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On behalf of Carter McKenzie, Nadia Telsey, and Lori Bosteder, SE-SURJ Stewards and Virginia Canavan, Common Sense Justice for Lane County Co-Convener