

Hello,

I am writing in support of HB 3224, to create greater transparency regarding the policies of Oregon DA offices.

Most DA offices do NOT have written policies about core functions of their offices. And they can do that because in Oregon there currently is no requirement to make these policies available to the public. For example the DA decides on charges for a given crime and they write the plea deals. Without a written policy, a defense attorney has not way of knowing if their client is being treated fairly. For example a defendant who is a person of color might be charged differently than a white person for the same crime. DA's have enormous power: the determine the charges and they write the plea deal. Given that 90 -95% of cases never go to trial, that means they ARE the justice system.

A few DAs make their policies public, most do not, and many actively subvert the effort to pin them down. At a recent community forum Kevin Barton, DA for Washington County told me he would NOT make his office's policies publicly available.

We need to change this policy of allowing DA offices to operate without public transparency and accountability. We need each DA's office to have written policies regarding core functionality. And we need to make these publicly available. That is the only way we can determine if the DA's office is operating in a just and fair manner. That's why I support HB 3224.

Regards,

Julie Walcer