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RE: House Bill 3224

Chair Williamson and members of the committee:

For the record my name is Carla Piluso, and I proudly represent House District 50, the great city of Gresham.

As many of you know, my background is in law enforcement. I was a police officer for three decades and Gresham's Police Chief for six years. I know from that experience that trust in law enforcement is critical to public safety. When members of the public trust law enforcement, they stay engaged with keeping our communities safe—they are more likely to report crimes, testify in court, and cooperate with law enforcement efforts.

Have transparent policies is essential to creating that sense of trust. Transparency is good for everyone involved in the criminal justice system. It gives both law enforcement and the community clear information about what is expected of them, and it gives the community the tools to hold law enforcement accountable and improve our system.

House Bill 3224 is a common-sense measure to increase transparency in District Attorney offices. It requires DAs to develop and maintain written policies about the core functions of their office, and it requires that those policies be posted on DAs' websites.

DAs make choices on a daily basis that have enormous impacts on Oregonians' lives. They decide who to charge and what they're charged with; which offenders get access to treatment and diversion programs; which victims get access to services and support; and a thousand other small decisions that add up to whether our criminal justice system is fair to every Oregonian.

But at least 40 percent of Oregon's District Attorney offices do not have internal written policies to guide their core work within the justice system. That means that in many cases when a member of the public reaches out to better understand how their local DA operates—for instance, the procedures around how a loved one's case is being handled—there aren't easily available or clear answers.

As legislators, we prioritize transparency and accountability. By statute and by rule, we've made our deliberations open to public scrutiny—because we know that Oregonians will have more trust in our work when they can understand how we make decisions and hold us accountable.

HB 3224 applies those core principles to the crucial work of Oregon's District Attorneys. Thank you for your time and attention today, and I urge you to support this bill.

Sincerely,

Carla C. Piluso  
Oregon State Representative, House District 50