



April 3, 2019

Co-Chair Elizabeth Steiner Hayward
Co-Chair Betsy Johnson
Co-Chair Dan Rayfield
Joint Committee on Ways & Means
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Clackamas County Courthouse Replacement Project

Dear Co-Chairs Johnson, Steiner Hayward, and Rayfield:

We write to encourage your support for \$31.5 million in bond funding to help advance a new Clackamas County Courthouse, as requested in the Chief Justice's budget request. As legislators, we strongly support this project because it will improve public safety, access to justice, and fairness for all of our residents.

Clackamas County's courthouse serves approximately 415,000 residents in 2019, but was built in 1936 to serve 50,000 residents. Three courtrooms have grown into 11 courtrooms, but the existing courthouse has outgrown its useful life and is no longer able to support additional modifications that meet the justice and public safety needs of our communities.

Clackamas County's courthouse replacement project meets the following goals:

Addresses public safety, delayed justice, and structural limitations

The existing 83 year old courthouse no longer safely serves the residents of Clackamas County. As you are well aware, the existing courthouse sits on unstable soil and is precariously three feet away from a hundred foot drop into the Willamette River. In addition, its obsolete design makes it a tremendous fire hazard and its brick construction is far beyond its useful life.

Per best practices, the existing courthouse is currently three courtrooms shy of being able to timely respond to existing caseload. This is no fault of any party, but a result of limited space. As a result, we hear of trial delays that extend for months and sometimes years, depending on the case type.

Finally, the courthouse design is outdated. It lacks separate paths for victims, witnesses, prisoners and defendants. It is not uncommon for defendants to be within arm's reach of their alleged victims.



Includes shared spaces for state agencies
Clackamas County's foresight to co-locate the Department of Human Services and the Office of Public Defense Services in the building indicates a willingness to both physically promote shared public safety service partnerships and provide collaborative funding methods and long-term cost savings to state agencies. We also appreciate that this co-location of state services makes the project eligible for 50/50 state matching funds.

Local commitment of funds

The requested \$31.5 million represents one-third of the state's 50% share to the overall costs of the new building, and will launch the design and engineering phase of the replacement project.

Clackamas County will seek the support of voters to pass a general obligation bond to fund its share of the courthouse replacement, and recently passed a resolution to fund the project by other local means if the voters do not approve a bond measure. In our opinion, we feel this action by the Board of County Commissioners signals a sincere level of commitment to the project.

As elected officials collectively representing almost every resident of Clackamas County, we are pleased by the county's firm commitment to see this project through in a timely fashion. We urge your support to make this a reality.

Sincerely,

Sen. Shemia Fagan, District 24

Sen. Rob Wagner, District 19

Sen. Alan Olsen, District 20

Sen. Kathleen Taylor, District 21

Sen. Chuck Thomsen, District 26

cc: Joint Ways & Means Subcommittee on Public Safety
Joint Ways & Means Subcommittee on Capital Construction