



Date: January 31st, 2020

To: Chair Sanchez and Members of the House Judiciary Committee

From: Louis De Sitter, OEA Government Relations

Re: OEA support for HB 4004

The Oregon Education Association (OEA) supports House Bill 4004 to ensure that every Oregonian who walks into a courtroom has equal access to quality legal representation and a fair trial.

The Oregon Education Association (OEA) represents over 45,000 licensed teachers and specialists, classified/education support professionals, community college faculty, retired educators, and student members. Our vision is to improve the future of all Oregonian's through quality education and a focus on lifelong learning, collective action, collaboration, respect for diversity, integrity, democracy, social justice, and professionalism.

We believe that it is important that the rights of all individuals are respected and defended regardless of income, class, race, or gender. We support this legislation as a first step towards achieving manageable caseload standards that allow public defenders the time and resources they need to fully investigate cases, provide zealous representation, and support their clients needs. These tools are critical to achieving more equitable outcomes in our criminal justice system and giving all Oregonians a fair shot to succeed.

Many of the students and families that our educators serve are impacted by the negative impacts of a parent or family member entering the criminal justice system. Families are separated and children can become homeless, enter the foster care system, and suffer from mental health issues. This creates significant barriers to students' ability to succeed in school and even lower their likelihood of graduation. This can lead to life long effects and generational incarceration and poverty.

At a time when student homelessness is at a record high and more and more students are facing mental health crises we believe that better access to wrap around services and better training and support for public defenders can also help avoid and mitigate for some of these negative impacts.

We urge your support of HB 4004 to put into statute the abolishment of the flat fee case rate contracting, provide for better representation on the public defense services commission, and continue the work to create equal access to justice for all Oreognians.

*Working wonders for public education*