

February 3, 2020

RE: House Bill 4004

Chair Sanchez, Members of the Committee,

The Oregon State Bar, in its 2020 Legislative Priorities, continues to support the Public Defense Services Commission's reform efforts. As was highlighted by the Sixth Amendment Center report in 2019, Oregon's indigent defense system faces numerous challenges including excessive caseloads and attorney pay parity.

The Bar supports a system of indigent defense representation that both supports public safety and protects the constitutional rights of criminal defendants. While we are proud of the work that the Public Defense Service Commission has done over the years, we recognize that changes are needed in order to ensure that high quality services continue to be provided to indigent Oregonians in the criminal justice system.

A key part of the Oregon State Bar's mission is ensuring that Oregon maintains a fair, inclusive and accessible justice system. Having a Public Defense Services Commission that reflects the wide variety of backgrounds and experiences facing those who need representation is a key component of ensuring an adequate defense. We believe the expansion of the commission is a step in the right direction.

The Oregon State Bar supports the efforts of the Office of Public Defense Services to ensure that indigent defense attorneys represent their clients' interests to the best of their abilities.