



FebruaryFebruary 14, 2020

Chair Prozanski, Vice Chair Thatcher, and Members of the Committee,

I write to you today on behalf of the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Union Local 555, in support of House Bill 4004. We represent over 25,000 workers in Oregon and Southwest Washington in several industries, including retail, meatpacking, healthcare, and more. UFCW Local 555 workers are a diverse group that have grown into the largest private sector labor union in Oregon, and we are proud to be a strong collective voice for working people.

As union members, we believe in creating structures in all parts of society that promote fairness and equal opportunity. We are proud to stand strong as advocates for fair pay for all workers, predictable scheduling so workers know when their next shift will be and how to plan accordingly, and access to healthcare regardless of race, gender, or immigration status, and we know it is critical that access to legal representation be viewed as an issue of economic justice for workers as well.

When low income Oregonians who cannot afford their own attorney are appointed a public defender, that attorney can be handling upwards of 100 other cases at the same time. This often means that attorneys are unable to meet with clients prior to a court date, are more likely to file for continuances because they haven't had adequate time to dedicate to their client, drawing out the process further, and are less able to stay in contact with their client during each stage of the process. These current realities have the very real potential to contribute to a spiral of instability for clients, many of whom are low income, people of color and/ or LGBTQ+, that can result in loss of housing, jobs, or even loss of child custody.

That is why we would like to thank Speaker Kotex and the Judiciary committee for their continued support for reforming public defense and we are grateful for this first step toward larger reforms that will come in the 2021 session.

House Bill 4004 is an important first step in reforming this broken system. We stand behind this bill in its efforts to create more manageable caseloads, provide critical support for public defenders, trauma-informed care training, increase accountability, and provide better access to wrap around services for clients in need.

As a member of the Fair Shot Coalition, the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Union Local 555 stands behind the vision that every Oregonian deserves a fair trial. That is why we respectfully urge the committee to support House Bill 4004 and support critical investments in Oregon's push for equal access to justice for all.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Jeff Anderson'.

Jeff Anderson  
Secretary-Treasurer  
UFCW Local 555