

**Testimony before the House Committee on Judiciary
Subcommittee on Civil Law**

February 1, 2021

Chair Power and members of the committee:

My name is David Wade and I am speaking to you today as the 2021 Oregon State Bar President. It is a pleasure to be here today and I welcome the opportunity to talk with you about the Oregon State Bar.

The Oregon State Bar – The Oregon State Bar (OSB) is a public corporation and an instrumentality of the Oregon Supreme Court with over 15,000 active members. The mission of the OSB is to serve justice and the public interest by promoting respect for the rule of law, improving the quality of legal services, and increasing access to justice. Under the direction of the Oregon Supreme Court, the bar licenses and disciplines lawyers and performs other functions to benefit the public. The bar does not receive any direct financial support in the form of taxpayer dollars from the General Fund, but is funded entirely by membership fees and revenue from various member service programs. The CEO of the bar oversees approximately 100 staff members not including the Professional Liability Fund.

Governance – The bar is administered by a 19-member volunteer Board of Governors. Fifteen of the members are lawyers and four are non-lawyers appointed based on their areas of interest and expertise. Attorney board members are elected by the membership from different regions to ensure geographic diversity. The OSB House of Delegates (HOD) serves as the representative assembly of the membership, and is also elected based on geographic region. The HOD votes on proposed ethics rules, fee increases and policies. It helps set policy direction for the bar. Composed of approximately 230 delegates, the HOD meets annually.

Key Traits – The Oregon State Bar has a number of traits that stand out among state bars.

- **Open Disciplinary System** – It is the only bar in the country which allows public access to disciplinary complaint files from the time the complaint is filed with the bar.
- **Mandatory Malpractice Coverage** – It is one of the only bars in the nation that requires attorneys to have malpractice insurance and that has a self-insuring organization to provide that coverage – the Professional Liability Fund.
- **Public Member Involvement** – The bar encourages public participation in all aspects of its operations. Four of the 19 members of the Board are public members. Public members also participate throughout the Oregon lawyer discipline system. Non-lawyers sit on the State Professional Responsibility Board, local investigation committees, trial panels and the Unlawful Practice of Law Committee.

- **Pro Bono** – Oregon lawyers spend an average of 10.8 hours per month providing pro-bono legal services. This does not include those working for legal aid organizations or non-profit groups that regularly provide legal services on a free or reduced fee basis. (2017 OSB Economic Survey). This year, the bar also partnered with FEMA, Red Cross and Legal Aid to provide pro bono attorneys to the victims of floods in Umatilla County, and wildfires around the state.
- **Campaign for Equal Justice** – Oregon is one of the few states that has developed a non-profit fundraising campaign to raise money from the legal community for legal services to the poor. Since 1991, CEJ has raised \$23 million for legal aid.

Thank you for your time, and I'd be happy to answer any additional questions you may have.

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