

Oregon Public Defense Services: Justice for All Oregonians

From the desk of Senator Michael Dembrow

**HB
2003**

HB 2003: MODERNIZING & IMPROVING PUBLIC DEFENSE

1) Improves Access to Justice for Low-income Oregonians

HB 2003 seeks incremental changes by adding policy improvements and best-practices to the existing laws regulating the Public Defense Services Commission (PDSC), the governing body that oversees public defense in Oregon. A strongly held tenet of American society is the right to counsel. Safeguarding an evidence-based, best-practice driven public defense system is the lynchpin to ensuring this right.

2) Better Client Representation

HB 2003 requires increasing compensation and resources while reducing case-loads in order to achieve reasonable and sustainable workloads thereby assuring quality representation and retention of practitioners.

- **Reasonable caseloads** will allow public defense providers the time it takes to build relationships with clients, understand their unique circumstances and build the best defense possible
- **Better compensation** for public defense providers will lead to less turnover, better workforce skill retention, and a more diverse defense community

3) Addresses Long-identified Problems in the Justice System

HB 2003 makes strides toward addressing disparities. Low-income clients who rely on public defense are disproportionately Black, Indigenous, and People of Color. It is no secret, public defense providers have had too many cases and too few resources to provide the client representation Oregonians deserve. An under-resourced public defense system exacerbates racial inequities in our justice system.

4) Establishes Role for Impacted Oregonians

HB 2003 modifies the make up of the Public Defense Services Commission to include a person with direct experience in the criminal justice system. This will provide a public defense client perspective as a decision-maker helping shape Oregon's public defense system and policies.

Please Support HB 2003...

A strong public defense system is crucial to improve access to justice, better outcomes for clients and communities, effective use of public funds and increase trust in the justice system for all Oregonians

