

To: Senate Committee on Judiciary and Ballot Measure 110 Implementation
From: Sybil Hebb, Oregon Law Center
Date: March 11th, 2021
Re: SB 298

Chair Prozanski, Vice-Chair Thatcher, and members of the committee:

On behalf of the Oregon Law Center (OLC), thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of SB 298, which would make non-substantive changes to statutes to remove barriers to access to justice. The bill was drafted with the input of multi-disciplinary stakeholders, and will simplify several procedures and clarify language.

As this committee knows, OLC's mission is to achieve justice for low-income communities of Oregon by providing a full range of the highest quality civil legal services. Our clients come to us for help in some of the most difficult times of their lives. They may be facing eviction or foreclosure and the threat of homelessness. They may have lost a home due to wildfires and be struggling to understand confusing proceedings in the face of homelessness. Or they may be struggling to escape or recover from domestic or sexual violence, and need assistance in seeking a protection order, child support, or a safe parenting plan.

When managing trauma, in times of crisis, it is hard to navigate systems. One of the most important parts of our jobs as lawyers is to help our clients manage complicated proceedings. And due to lack of staffing capacity, we are simply unable to serve everyone who needs this help. The majority of people in need of legal assistance are navigating court systems on their own, without the advice of a lawyer. The technical changes proposed by the Oregon Judicial Department in SB 298 are designed with the needs of litigants in mind, to facilitate access to justice.

Specifically, the bill would:

- Conform language in civil stalking statutes, to make it less confusing;
- Remove barriers to submitting reports in sex offender reporting cases, to facilitate filing;
- Modify venue provisions in cases when a petitioner seeks a change both of name and gender identity, to facilitate joint filings;
- Require judgments regarding child support to identify any Title IV-D child support order, so that Oregon can better coordinate with the federal government for purposes of re-imbusement; and
- Remove the notarization requirement for stipulated modifications of parenting time orders, to facilitate electronic filing.

For the above reasons, we urge support of this bill, and thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.