



From the office of
REPRESENTATIVE KARIN POWER
House District 41

Chair Bynum, Vice Chair Noble, and members of the committee,

For the record, my name is Karin Power, and I represent House District 41. I am truly grateful to bring House Bill 2003 before you today.

Concerns over the adequacy of Oregon's public defense system are not new. Organizations and lawyers have long raised concerns about workload, burnout, and low pay that leads lawyers to leave public defense offices for other practice areas. Oregon's low pay also makes it difficult to attract talented candidates from other states with fairer compensation levels. Ultimately, this means that not all Oregonians accused of a crime are receiving the same meaningful access to justice and right to counsel – a bedrock of our Constitution and our judicial system.

A few years ago, after receipt of the nonpartisan Sixth Amendment Center's report that highlighted structural and constitutional issues with our current system, this House Judiciary Committee had lengthy discussions on a previous bill, HB 3145. The report also provided recommendations to move forward on addressing these systemic issues, and stakeholders have been engaged for the past few years on how to begin undertaking some of these reforms.

HB 2003 represents these next steps for reform through the leadership of the existing Public Defense Services Commission, and I know that stakeholders are here to share more information about the work ahead and the work still to come. I urge you to support the passage of HB 2003, and I thank you for the opportunity to join you today.