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April 13, 2021

To: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On Public Safety
From: Amy Miller, Executive Director

Re: Support for HB 5012: Oregon Judicial Department Budget

Dear Co-Chair Gorsek, Co-Chair Sollman, and Members of the Subcommittee,

Youth, Rights & Justice is Oregon's only non-profit juvenile public defense firm. Every year, YRJ represents over 1200 children and parents in Oregon's juvenile court system. All of our clients come from low-income families. Most have suffered significant trauma and many have physical, mental health and/or substance abuse issues. Approximately 45% are children of color. Because of our unique position handling court-appointed juvenile cases, we often see the same systemic problems and we work to change the policies that contribute to these problems.

We are writing to encourage your financial support of the Oregon Judicial Department. OJD plays a critical role in improving the practice of juvenile law. Through the Juvenile Court Improvement Program (JCIP), OJD supports a data-informed, collaborative statewide effort to deliver better outcomes for children and parents impacted by the juvenile dependency system. I can't emphasize how important JCIP is to a healthy juvenile court system. JCIP provides opportunities for training judges and stakeholders, it monitors outcome data and ensures continuous quality improvement, and serves the critical role of a convening body, holding space for key conversations about how to improve our work. Some of the initiatives JCIP has championed include: improved representation of parents and children, increased access to visitation, consistent and equitable court orders, and reduced time to permanency.

Within OJD's proposed budget are two policy option packages that will build on the work of JCIP to further improve the juvenile court system. First, OJD seeks funding to support improved handling of juvenile delinquency cases through a program similar to JCIP. Second, OJD seeks funding to continue implementation of specialty courts and, in particular, family treatment court. Family treatment court has been shown to be an effective model for resolving dependency cases in which parental substance use disorder is a barrier to safe parenting. Through family treatment court, parents have an

opportunity to voluntarily receive additional services and supports that, when implemented with fidelity to the model, have been shown to reduce foster care use.

A delinquency court improvement program and implementation of family treatment court are important pieces of OJD's work to improve outcomes for people who are underserved, vulnerable, or marginalized. We encourage support and funding for the Oregon Judicial Department and appreciate OJD's collaborative approach to ensuring access to justice for all Oregonians.

Thank you for your consideration of this important issue.

Sincerely,

Amy Miller
Executive Director