

April 14, 2021

To: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On Public Safety  
RE: Support for HB 5012: Oregon Judicial Department Budget

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

The Oregon Library Association (OLA) serves to provide resources and opportunities for advocacy, education, leadership, and collaborations, in order to continually strengthen Oregon's libraries and the communities they serve. Among OLA's more than 1000 members include law librarians working in Oregon's county law libraries.

We write today in support of the Oregon Judicial Department's (OJD) budget request, which includes pass-through funding for county law libraries. These libraries are critical public institutions that are often the last refuge for those who can't get legal help elsewhere.


In this time of COVID and the physical closure of libraries, law librarians have found themselves busier than ever responding to "legal problem questions" from non-attorney patrons. Such questions have focused on things like custody and parenting time enforcement; landlord evictions; unemployment benefits; how to issue and respond to protective orders; and probate administration.

Attorneys rely on county law libraries too, especially those outside the metro area. For solo and small firm lawyers across the state, the law library provides access to legal information resources they can't afford on their own, as well as to materials on subjects outside their practice area.

While OLA supports the full funding of OJD's proposed budget, we also advocate for restoring the amount that was cut specifically from the law library program in July 2020. This reduction - \$900,000 or about 25% of the 2020-21 total appropriation - was made when a statewide revenue deficit was predicted. Now that revenue projections are higher than originally anticipated, we urge the Legislature to restore this funding and make the county law library program whole again.

The Oregon Library Association supports robust funding for the Oregon Judicial Department, and appreciates OJD's continued dedication to our county law libraries. By maintaining these free, specialized public libraries that provide authoritative legal resources, law librarian expertise, and tools to connect laypeople with attorneys, we help ensure access to justice for *all* Oregonians.

Sincerely,



Kate Lasky  
OLA President