



LANE COUNTY LAW LIBRARY

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Testimony in Support of HB 5012
Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Public Safety
April 14, 2021

Good afternoon, Co-Chair Gorsek, Co-Chair Sollman, and members of the Subcommittee.

My name is Sue Ludington. I'm the Law Librarian at the Lane County Law Library in Eugene, with 9 years' experience in Oregon county law libraries. I'm here in support of HB 5012 and funding of the Oregon Judicial Department.

As in every biennium since 2011, OJD's proposed budget allocates about \$7.5 million for county law libraries. I urge you to support that allocation in particular, and ask that you consider the incredible benefit to our citizens if that amount were increased.

Counties are statutorily required to provide public law library services. Patrons cover a broad spectrum: lawyers, self-represented litigants, laypeople with non-litigation legal matters, legal researchers, private investigators, students, non-profits, public librarians, and more. In the "before times" (which we hope to return to soon!), our county law library - like others - was open to the public 8am-5pm, 5 days a week.

Along with the print and electronic collection (materials often unaffordable elsewhere), patrons utilize computers, photocopiers, quiet space for studying or meeting with clients, and - most importantly - they interact with an experienced law librarian, who knows how to talk through their legal problem, guide them to meaningful materials, point them to quality lawyer representation and legal advice, and generally help them better understand next steps.

Unfortunately due to flat funding over so many years, the range of resources and personnel provided through law libraries varies significantly statewide. Too many counties seemingly have limited staff, hard-to-access resources, and little-to-no dedicated space. In the last month, I've probably fielded a half dozen legal reference questions from patrons outside of Lane County - which I feel privileged to do! But this exemplifies the lack of equitable public law library services in Oregon and the need for increased funding.

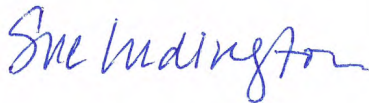
County law libraries have experienced uncertain funding for the past decade, including periodic cuts forced on law libraries. This was seen most recently in July 2020 when the economic future

was uncertain, State departments were asked to propose reductions, and the Legislature approved a 25% cut to that year's county law library allocation. Aside from the unpredictable funding process, which can be extraordinarily hard on counties, I fear continued reductions of this degree could result in a total loss of law libraries statewide within the next 10 years.

As I see my public library colleagues receive terrific support from the State Library of Oregon, and wonder if our county law libraries are more aligned with public libraries rather than OJD priorities, I happened to take note of a paragraph in the LFO Budget Review document for HB 5017, this year's State Library Budget bill. It calls out the State Reference Coordinating Council, which was created by statute in 2015 and consists of the State Librarian, State Archivist, and State Law Librarian. Its purpose is "to coordinate delivery of library information and services between the State Library, State Archives, and the State of Oregon Law Library and to reduce duplication of effort." I think it would be phenomenal if this group would consider looking at county law libraries, evaluate existing services and collaboration possibilities, and explore options for stable funding.

Thank you for listening and thank you for supporting HB 5012.

Respectfully submitted,



Sue Ludington
Lane County Law Librarian