

Testimony in Support of HB 5030

Co-Chairs Gorsek and Sollman, and Members of the Committee:

My name is James von Hippel, and I am an attorney with Southwestern Oregon Public Defender Services, Inc., in Coos Bay, Oregon. I have been an attorney for over 30 years and have worked in this office for almost 15 years.

I urge your support of HB 5030 as well as the \$20 million investment in public defense from the Governor's Recommended Budget.

Unlike some public defenders' offices, in the Southwestern Oregon Public Defender Office, we represent our clients in juvenile dependency and delinquency cases, civil commitment hearings, post-conviction relief matters, and contempt/child-support cases (we represent persons who are charged with contempt for failure to pay child support), in addition to the routine criminal cases.

In our office, we have eight attorneys. We had nine attorneys, but one of our attorneys got a job elsewhere at the start of 2021. Only six of our attorneys are qualified to represent clients in major felony cases. Our director is an attorney who, while qualified to handle major felony cases, handles almost exclusively juvenile matters, in addition to her administrative duties. That leaves five of us to handle the major felony cases.

My caseload includes adult M11 cases and other major felony cases and contempt/child-support cases as well as misdemeanor cases, along with the occasional civil commitment hearing and post-conviction relief case. I also represent my office in Mental Health Court, a specialty court for persons charged with crimes who are experiencing mental health struggles. I represent all clients in Mental Health Court.

The great majority of criminal clients in this county need court-appointed attorneys. Your support of PDSC's current service level and the investment of \$20 million from the Governor's Recommended Budget will ensure that I, and my public defense provider colleagues, will be able to provide this constitutionally-mandated service to the community, a service which is especially needed by and valuable to our clients who have mental-health problems.

James von Hippel