

To whom it may concern,

My name is Alex Walsh, I'm currently a 2L at Lewis and Clark Law School and this year I also have the privilege to be part of the first ever Public Defense Practicum with Metropolitan Public Defender. I am writing in support of continued funding for this program, and to that effect I would like to share some of my experiences so far.

Through this program, I can work as a Certified Law Student as a 2L while receiving many of the same trainings that first year attorneys are going through. I have known I wanted to be a public defender for a very long time, and a big goal of mine in Law School was to find ways to get into the field as quickly as possible. For most of my peers, getting opportunities for in-court experience are few and far between, and many need to wait until 3L to meet local private firm requirements. Since finishing training I have had the distinct pleasure of working with 5 wonderful clients, and I'm happy to report that getting to know their stories is just as fulfilling as solving the logic puzzle of figuring out how to achieve their desired outcomes.

I am incredibly proud to announce that I made my first two court appearances this October, first giving an oral argument in support of a Modification to a No-Contact Order and most recently presenting a Civil Compromise agreement for my first-ever client. Doing the practicum would have been worth it just for the opportunity to stand there and introduce myself on the record, but I soon realized the real benefit in this program: getting the opportunity to meet clients, get to know their stories and fight for their goals in court. Both court appearances resulted in favorable outcomes for my clients (modification granted and dismissal, respectively) and I owe those victories entirely to the incredible staff at MPD who have given their time and energy to help me figure out this practice.

To sum it up, I cannot express enough my firm belief that this program is worth continued funding. I believe this practicum is the single best option available to law students interested in public defense after graduation and even for those who aren't, there is no more valuable experience for a future litigator than litigating. I can personally say that my work for MPD has solidified what could already be considered an iron-clad interest in the field, and I am confident that every minute of work I put in here will pay off exponentially once I graduate and am working as a Public Defender.

Alex Walsh (He/him)

Lewis & Clark Law School,

2L

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Axel Jurgens, and I am a 3L at Lewis & Clark Law School currently working as a Certified Law Student at Metropolitan Public Defender as part of the Public Defense Practicum. The experience has been remarkable and invaluable. I am very grateful for the opportunity to advocate for people accused of crimes who could not otherwise afford a criminal defense.

Many students come to Lewis & Clark intending to do public interest work upon graduation, and I similarly aspire towards environmental and non-profit work. However, my time doing public defense has revealed a different path, one focused on protecting fundamental rights, overcoming individualized burdens of poverty, and, ultimately, taking care of strangers. It is difficult, fulfilling, and constitutionally necessary work.

I therefore strongly encourage continued support for the innovative collaboration of Oregon's law schools with public defense services. Such programs provide both immense educational benefits to law students and significant actual benefits to their local communities. I am certain that there is no shortage of law students who, like me, would be receptive to having their horizons broadened in this way.

Sincerely,

Axel Jurgens

To whom it may concern,

As a 3L student nearing graduation, I've had the privilege of working with clients in a variety of roles. I've assisted folks seeking post-conviction relief, worked with adjudicated youth, and helped indigent clients abroad with civil matters. Having entered law school intending to become a defense attorney at the state court level, the MPD practicum has provided me with the invaluable experience of taking on my first client meetings in misdemeanor cases. Each time I meet a client, I have to re-process that this is my client, my responsibility, and another person's case that I have the opportunity to dive deep into, develop, and learn from scratch.

When I attend these initial client meetings, I often have little information about who my client truly is. I know their charges, what the police reports say about them, and sometimes their criminal history. These meetings allow me to understand my clients on a deeper level. I learn about their mitigating circumstances, what led them to the alleged incident, and the personal challenges they face. Through these conversations, they become humanized. In these meetings, I am learning how to create space for clients to share life difficulties that often expand far beyond their cases. One client meeting that left a lasting impact involved a young woman who was the sole caretaker for her chronically ill family members. During that time with her, I felt the privilege of being someone she could open up to about her difficult circumstances, as well as responsible for helping her navigate the additional stressors that a criminal case brings. Hearing her story and becoming an advocate for someone with such heavy obligations reminded me why I chose this line of work in the firstplace.

Sincerely,

Madison Wood