



FIFTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT

CLACKAMAS COUNTY COURTHOUSE
807 MAIN STREET, OREGON CITY, OREGON 97045

January 27, 2023

The Honorable Floyd Prozanski, Chair
The Honorable Kim Thatcher, Vice-Chair
Senate Judiciary Committee
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

Re: Support for SB 235

Dear Chair Prozanski, Vice-Chair Thatcher, and Members of the Committee:

I write in support of SB 235, which would fund an additional circuit court judge position in Clackamas County. Presiding Judge Mike Wetzel and Trial Court Administrator Debbie Spradley also support the bill.

Our county needs an additional judge and associated support staff so we can better serve our community. Clackamas County is Oregon's third largest county, with a population of around 435,000, but our circuit has just eleven judges and one paid pro tem judge. The numerous unpaid, part-time judges who handle cases provide crucial support, but their work does not fill our need for a permanent, full-time circuit court judge. Leaders in our circuit had planned to wait until 2025, after our larger courthouse is constructed, to request additional judges. Unfortunately, that approach is no longer viable, and we seek to have an additional judge begin this year.

The shortage of circuit court judges in Clackamas County prevents us from effectively helping some people in need. To avoid schedule gaps, judges are sometimes assigned multiple trials on a given day, even if only one trial can proceed. As a result, attorneys, litigants, and witnesses occasionally arrive at the courthouse only to learn their trial has been bumped. In addition, sensitive and complicated cases are sometimes moved among multiple judges for scheduling reasons. These approaches can result in increased time, cost, and trauma for court participants, and they can diminish judicial understanding of nuanced situations.

We believe that the addition of a judge would help us serve our community in a more timely, efficient, and trauma-informed way. Together with Presiding Judge Mike Wetzel and Trial Court Administrator Debbie Spradley, I respectfully urge your support for SB 235.

Sincerely,

Ann Lininger
Circuit Court Judge