

Kathleen Johnson, Presiding Judge

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CIRCUIT COURT FOR DOUGLAS COUNTY

Sixteenth Judicial District

January 28, 2023

The Honorable Floyd Prozanski, Chair
Senate Judiciary Committee

By email only

Senator Prozanski:

Thank you for your consideration of Senate Bill 235.

Douglas County is the ninth most populous county in Oregon. Of the top nine counties by population, Douglas is the largest in geographic area. The Court serves numerous communities that are remote in location from our Courthouse. Examples are Reedsport, Drain, Elkton, Glendale, and Tiller, to name a few. As with all communities, those families in which the parents struggle with substance abuse issues come to the court in various ways, most notably child dependency cases.

As of the date of this letter, I am informed that Douglas County has 110 children in substitute care due to substance use disorders of one or both parents, and another 15 children who are in reunification status after being removed as a result of parental substance use. Douglas County has been identified as a county in which a Family Treatment Court would likely improve the outcomes in these cases by decreasing the amount of time our children spend in substitute care.

While our local judges have been able to process our current caseloads despite an insufficient number of judges, we simply cannot find sufficient docket time or judicial resources to start a new program at this time. If we were able to add just one judge, we would have the necessary resources to immediately begin the process of working with community partners and obtaining funding sources to institute a family treatment court. We would also attempt to look for other innovations that would allow our branch to contribute to improved outcomes for our children and our remote communities. In civil, domestic relations and criminal cases, we would be able to decrease the total time it takes to bring matters to trial by minimizing the number of setovers related to court unavailability.

Please invest in the Judicial Branch so that it has the judicial resources to do the important work that we are charged with performing for our communities.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kathleen Johnson". The ink is black and the signature is fluid and legible.

Kathleen Johnson
Presiding Judge