

Submitter: Kristen Shelman
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Judiciary
Measure: HB2497

Thank you Honorable Chair Kropf, honorable vice chairs, members of the committee
My name is Kristen Shelman, and I'm a Harney County Commissioner.

I'm here today to support House Bill 2497

1. Our current courthouse with the attached jail is in need of replacement.
2. Harney County lacks the tax base to be able to fund the construction of a new courtroom space and/or jail.
3. There is not enough space in the current courthouse to provide enough office space and privacy for essential staff. There isn't enough space to allow for more than a dozen people to be present for the Harney County Court meetings. The Circuit Court also lacks enough office space to provide for some of their staff. The current Courthouse lacks capacity to provide needed services to the public and allow for proper storage of documents required.
4. We have safety and security concerns that have to be addressed. The high liability issues that exist can only be done with new construction of a jail due to the original construction of the building being done poorly.
5. Harney County's budget will never be able to do this without help from the State of Oregon and from your committee. We ask at this time that the Grand Bargain be reconsidered. We have to have new ways to help provide for the States needs that the County is responsible for taking care of.
6. Harney County is the largest county in the State of Oregon and the size of some States. Services are spread thin due to our size, lack of population, and the amount of land held by the State and Federal Governments. The State and Federal Government can not continue to expect a Frontier Rural County to provide the quality and level of services for the public without consistent investment from a real partnership driven by concern for the public to access needed services.

The population of Harney County is around 7,400 people spread over 10,000 square miles of land. As local leaders, we continue to try to find ways to help our economy find solid businesses and secure a better future.

I appreciate your time today. The work you will do today can have a huge impact for our County and other rural counties. I hope to see continued support for HB-2497 and hopefully a work group to lead the way to further develop an opportunity to work together. Thank you, Commissioner Kristen Shelman.