

AOC ASSOCIATION OF OREGON COUNTIES

March 8, 2023

TO: Co-chairs Sollman and Evans, and Members of the Public Safety Subcommittee of the Joint Committee on Ways & Means

FROM: Association of Oregon Counties Executive Director, Gina Nikkel

RE: SB 5512, OJD biennial budget bill including POPs 116, 119, 121, and 122

Dear Co-chairs,

My name is Gina Nikkel, I serve as Executive Director of the Association of Oregon Counties (AOC). AOC has represented Oregon counties since 1906. I offer this testimony today on SB 5512 on behalf of AOC.

As you know, counties partner with the state government to provide numerous critical services that residents of Oregon rely on. One of those partnerships is with the Oregon Judicial Department, with whom Oregon Counties partner to provide courtrooms and office space for the state's Circuit Court system.

While counties shoulder much of the costs of providing offices for the state Circuit Court system, the state makes a number of important investments to assist with maintenance, security, and capital construction for both state circuit courts and county courts. These investments take the form of passthrough funding, contained in OJD's biennial budget bill – the bill you are considering today. This passthrough funding covers things like court security, conciliation/mediation, and law libraries, all of which are critical to ensure the justice system can function. In addition to pass-through funding, the OJD budget typically contains bonds to help counties replace courthouses. Counties are required to provide matching funds, but these state investments are extremely important, because even large, sophisticated counties would face incredible hardship trying to replace a courthouse without these state matching funds.

Funding needs for courthouse improvements and replacements typically far outweigh the amount of state funds available each biennium. In a wonderful example of the state-county partnership at its best, AOC and OJD work together each biennium to facilitate a prioritization process to determine which county projects should be first in line to receive available funding. POP 122 reflects OJD's request for bonding funds to provide the state match for the courthouse replacement projects that rose to the top of the priority list via our collaborative process. POP 119 and 121 would provide state funding for the courthouse improvement needs and planning needs that rose to the top of the priority list via our collaborative process. AOC supports these POPs and hopes very much that these funding requests can be included in OJD's budget this session.

One other POP I'd like to mention AOC's support for is POP 116, which will help ensure that entrance screening can be provided in 22 courthouses.



Thank you for taking the time to consider OJD's budget requests, including the POPs, and for your continued efforts to maintain a healthy partnership with counties when it comes to court funding, as well as all the other ways we partner together for the benefit of all Oregonians.

Gina Nikkel

Executive Director