



March 9, 2023

Co-Chairs Sollman and Evans and Members of the Joint Ways & Means Subcommittee on Public Safety,

My name is Maureen McGee, and I am appearing today on behalf of the Oregon Association of Defense Counsel (“OADC”). OADC is an organization of approximately 600 lawyers in the State of Oregon who devote a significant portion of their practice to the defense of civil litigation. For many years, the OADC has consistently supported a fully-funded judicial branch, capable of safely providing essential services to all citizens.

OADC strongly supports SB 5512, and urges the legislature to ensure that the Judicial Branch is funded at Current Service Levels for the 2023-25 biennium. While civil filings in Oregon dropped during the COVID-19 Pandemic, case processing times and workload went in the opposite direction, leading to longer delay for litigants. Courts have since made admirable progress working through the pandemic backlog, but that progress is stalling. As new civil case filings are beginning to increase, delays are likely to continue. Delays in the disposition of civil cases like contract and business disputes, tort claims, civil rights claims, and employment disputes can have far-reaching impacts on our economy, negatively affecting both the daily lives of individual litigants and the business decisions of organizations both large and small throughout the state. We urge the legislature to recognize that funding the courts at current service levels is absolutely critical to ensuring that the branch has the resources necessary to provide litigants with timely justice.

I would also like to bring your attention to two policy option packages of particular interest to OADC. Our organization has long believed that judicial salaries in this state must be increased to attract the most qualified and talented members of the Bar to judicial appointments. We are therefore strongly supportive of Policy Option Package 111 to improve judicial compensation. When adjusted for cost of living, Oregon’s salary for circuit court judges is currently 50th in the country. These salaries simply do not match the responsibilities of the position. A fairly paid judiciary is essential to the state’s ability to continue to attract highly qualified and skilled jurists, and we strongly urge the legislature to implement the salary increases as proposed by the Chief Justice in POP 111.

Finally, our members have relied heavily on remote proceedings during and since the pandemic, and recognize that further investment and staffing is necessary to continue those services. We therefore urge your support of Policy Option Package 106, regarding remote proceedings.

OADC supports these budget proposals, because we believe that these investments are necessary to provide the baseline in funds and resources for the judiciary to properly function and maintain its very important services to the community. We urge you to ensure access to justice for all members of our community through adopting SB 5512 and the budget requests in Policy Option Packages 111 and 106.

Thank you for your consideration of OADC's input, and thank you for the opportunity to testify.

OADC Government Affairs Committee

Peter Tuenge – President, OADC

Heather Bowman – President-Elect, OADC

Dan Larsen – Secretary/Treasurer, OADC

Lloyd Bernstein – Chair, OADC Government Affairs Committee

Molly Marcum

Daniel Schanz

Maureen McGee (Lobbyist)

Rocky Dallum (Lobbyist)