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March 21, 2023

SUBJECT: Support for HB 2308

Chair Kropf and Members of the House Judiciary Committee:

I want to offer my support for HB 2308 that eliminates the two-tier system of pay for Elected District Attorneys. The legislature has an opportunity to make an investment in offices at a pivotal time in Oregon. I have been the elected DA in Union County since 2014 and have been a prosecutor for nearly 15 years.

While my office is budgeted to employ four attorneys, we are currently operating at 50% and have been down at least one attorney for well over a year. Recruitment has been challenging in a way that I have never seen before. It is particularly difficult in rural areas where we ask people to take a chance, and move their families across the state.

Just yesterday, I was the only attorney in the office. I want to give you a snapshot into what my day looked like: I handled probation violations and juvenile matters, reviewed reports and made charging decisions in between court hearings. I negotiated cases with defense attorneys and spent the afternoon in our Behavioral Health Court staffing and court proceedings. I answered questions for law enforcement regarding ongoing investigations throughout the day and into the night.

I run the administration for our office, carry a caseload which includes sex abuse, homicides and attempted murder cases. I respond to major crime call outs and review search warrants, and answer questions at all hours—this past year, even on Christmas. I mention these duties because in smaller jurisdictions, the elected DA often takes on the responsibilities that are able to be delegated in larger jurisdictions. We need to make investments in prosecution positions to continue to retain and attract high quality candidates for this important work.

Please eliminate the two-tiers for District Attorneys and pass HB 2308.

Sincerely,

/s/

Kelsie J. Davis McDaniel
Union County District Attorney