

Submitter: Jane Stackhouse

On Behalf
Of:

Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On Public
Safety

Measure: SB5530

Please consider adding to the budget for the Oregon State Medical Examiner's Office. As homicides and drug overdoses are increasing in Oregon, we need the medical examiner's office to be able to perform post mortems, coordinate public health data, and issue death certificates. This office is chronically understaffed with high turnover because MD's with a specialty in forensic pathology are in high demand nationally and Oregon offers low pay, mediocre benefits, and excess work.

Starting salaries in Washington State are between \$13,000 and \$16,800 per month because medical examiners are skilled medical doctors who must not only investigate suspicious deaths but must deal sympathetically with family members and participate in the judicial system by testifying. It is difficult to prevent crimes and essential that criminals be brought to justice. This takes a full team of law enforcement and forensic pathologists.

I know there are many competing demands for the budget. You know from Dr. Hurst's testimony that he is trying valiantly to do more with less. Commendable but at a high cost to staff, families, and the justice system. Please budget to afford a competitive salary and benefit package for our Medical Examiners.