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RE: SB 337

Dear Chair Prozanski, Vice-chair Thatcher and members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary.:

I am writing to express my serious concerns with SB 337. While SB 337 has many qualities that would help in alleviating the current criminal justice crises, the bill's attempt to exclude Consortia as a business delivery model for public defense would severely impact access to justice and exacerbate the lack of attorney capacity in public defense.

I have been an attorney for the Clackamas Indigent Defense Consortium (CIDC) for 8 years. Previously I was in private practice in Portland and was recruited to practice in Clackamas. I have loved practicing in Clackamas County and serving the community. CIDC is the only public defense provider in Clackamas County. CIDC has been a source of support for me as an attorney. If consortia are eliminated as SB 337 would do I and my colleagues would lose this support in 2 years. SB 337 would force us to either contract individually with the Office of Public Defense Service or leave public defense.

As an attorney of color, I have had to make many painful sacrifices. Unfortunately, if SB 337 eliminates consortia I would likely leave public defense making another painful sacrifice. Many of my colleagues feel similarly. Clackamas County would lose many public defense attorneys leaving the county without sufficient public defense counsel. Like Multnomah County, this would lead to defendants without counsel and ultimately to dismissal of otherwise legitimate cases. Access to justice would be severely affected and it would also be a risk to public safety.

SB 337 must be amended to include public defense consortia. Consortia are a key component of access to justice in Oregon, their elimination would be a death blow to access to justice in Oregon.

Sincerely,

Ruben Medina

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