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CITY OF  
**PORTLAND, OREGON**

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**Ted Wheeler, Mayor**  
Carmen Rubio, Commissioner  
Dan Ryan, Commissioner  
Rene Gonzalez, Commissioner  
Mingus Mapps, Commissioner

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April 19, 2023

Joint Committee on Ways and Means  
Subcommittee on Public Safety  
900 Court St, NE  
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Co-Chairs Sollman and Evans, Vice Chairs Gorsek and David Brock Smith, and members of the committee,

The City of Portland appreciates the opportunity to submit testimony in support of SB 5532, the Public Defense Services Commission Budget.

The City is acutely aware of the need for robust investment into the State's public defense system. All individuals charged with a crime in Oregon have the right to an attorney to provide ethical and effective representation through the legal process. Public defenders play a critical role in the City's public safety system and we currently face a crisis in the form of a shortage in legal representation for people facing criminal charges.

Portland has faced an unprecedented spikes in crime, including gun violence, property crimes, and organized retail theft, and we hear the desperate pleas from our constituents to address these major public safety concerns. City government is constantly working to identify solutions and appropriately channel local resources to support preventative efforts while also upholding our duty to enforce the law. However, we now face the harsh reality that insufficient public defender resources is translating into criminal cases getting dismissed on constitutional grounds, resulting in enormous public safety investments utterly wasted with no benefit to the community.

The City applauds the work of the tri-branch workgroup, made up of members of the legislative, judiciary and executive branches, for their work in addressing the governance and structural issues within public defense through SB 337. However, without a significant investment in the public defense system, this crisis will only worsen. The investments outlined in SB 5532 will allow for the retention of experienced public defenders, the training and supervision of new public defenders, and increased staff capacity and data collection to ensure that the public defense system and the legislature has the tools they need to ensure equitable access to legal representation.

The City of Portland urges your support of the robust investments included in SB 5532.

Sincerely,

Mayor Ted Wheeler

Commissioner Carmen Rubio

Commissioner Dan Ryan

Commissioner Rene Gonzalez

Commissioner Mingus Mapps