



May 3, 2023

Dear Co-Chairs Sollman and Evans, Members of the Committee,

My name is Charlie Peirson, I am Second Vice President with Oregon AFSCME and Local 2805 member. I am a public defender in my ninth year. I've worked on every kind of case from traffic violations to murder. I currently represent Oregonians charged with major felonies.

Thank you for your time today and thank you for your commitment to addressing the public defense crisis and to ensuring that our state meets its duty to guarantee that every person charged with a crime has an attorney, whether they can afford one or not.

That said, I'm here to urge you not to support SB 1093. Please do not spend good time and money on yet another effort to find a more palatable solution to the problem than those that experts and practitioners have identified for years. This body already knows that (1) there are too many cases for the number of public defenders and (2) the only options are to increase the number of attorneys and support staff and to decrease the number of cases.

Advocates have offered ideas for how to do both. Prosecutors have opposed efforts to restrain their power to prosecute, whether through referenda like Measure 110 or through legislative efforts to create accountability structures for discovery violations or to create procedures to make cases easier to resolve. For its part, this legislature has heard plenty of requests for structural change and for funding changes dating back decades. The current problem is not new, and the only reason it has not been fixed yet is because the legislature has not properly funded the system. Instead, we have sought to make do with stopgaps and studies and the problem has grown and grown.

I have heard from several of you that you want a suitable plan before you would feel comfortable funding the kind of expansion that's needed. I urge you to consider that such a plan exists in SB 337 and to invest your time and energy into making that plan work.

We know that you are committed to getting attorneys for the folks who don't have them. Every dollar and every minute of practitioner time that goes to SB 1093 is a dollar or a minute that won't be available to enact the structural solutions that we need.

