

Co-chairs and members of the Committee:

My name is John Smith, and I am a resident of Multnomah County. I am a relatively new Defense Investigator, working primarily on state cases for attorneys representing in.di.gent defendants in Oregon.

I have been working as an investigator for over three years. I worked in the restaurant industry for six years prior and wanted to take on a career that would give me better financial stability. I have found this profession to be a natural fit for me, and I find the work enjoyable and deeply rewarding. As I began working for attorneys, I obtained work quickly. However, I came to realize that the ease of obtaining work was directly connected to the low rate of pay.

The current rate of \$40 per hour sounded like a fair wage to me when I started, but I quickly learned that due to significant overhead - about 50%, and the long delays in payment, it is not possible for me to support my family at this rate of pay. In order to make ends meet, I had to take on other work in the service industry; I had left. Oddly I found it pays me a greater net wage, but it keeps me from taking on more public defense cases.

As an investigator, I work with clients who are often unhoused or suffering from mental illness. I help these clients access services and navigate a complex system in order to reach a just and fair resolution to their cases.

I hope to continue working with Oregon public defenders on these important cases. But I can only do so if the rate paid by OPDS is raised to an amount that I can live and raise my family on.

I urge members of the committee to pass the OPDS budget as submitted and to pass Policy Option Package 114 to put us on the path toward alleviating the public defense crisis in Oregon and to ensure just and timely resolutions for in.di.gent defendants in Oregon's courts.

Thank you for your time and attention.

John Smith