



DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

DATE: February 6, 2024

TO: Chair Prozanski, Vice-Chair Thatcher, and
Members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary

FROM: Kimberly McCullough, Legislative Director
Oregon Department of Justice

SUBJECT: Support for SB 1541 – Judicial Positions

This testimony is presented in support of SB 1541, which will add new judgeships in three judicial districts around Oregon.

The State of Oregon has a constitutional obligation to administer justice “completely and without delay.” Art I, Section X. One of the major barriers to fulfilling that requirement is the lack of judges in Oregon’s circuit courts—the state trial courts that handle every type of case.

Department of Justice attorneys represent the State of Oregon in many of these case types—most often in criminal, civil, and juvenile dependency cases. We see first-hand the effects of courts having to double- and triple- set trials, what can cause lengthy delays because a judge is not available. We also see the challenges caused by having different judges sit on the same case in order to hold hearings in a timely manner.

SB 1541 will also increase access to justice for the people of Oregon. Proper judicial staffing is necessary to ensure that our courts are open and accessible. Going to court can be a very difficult and intimidating experience for many people, and resources are needed to provide the public with the information and support they need, along with the swift justice they deserve.

Attorney General Rosenblum and the Department of Justice support SB 1541 to continue adding needed circuit judge positions in these counties of highest need.