

To: Senate Judiciary Committee  
Re: In support of SB 1541  
Date: February 3, 2024

My family and I have lived in Washington County for over 30 years. We have watched while a relatively suburban/rural community has grown and diversified into a more urban setting. There were approximately 300,000 residents when we arrived; there are now over 600,000. In addition, several factors have led to increase crime rates per capita in that time frame.

Public safety and justice is achieved via a complex system of several interdependent services. These interdependencies make it imperative that each service functions efficiently and quickly so as to not obstruct others. While many of our public safety and justice services are underfunded, one critical area is that of our courts. If courts cannot process cases in a timely fashion, it will be to the detriment of what other services can achieve.

Washington County has retained 15 judges for many years, despite the increase in our population and its challenges. Analysis reviewed by Washington County (conducted 2017-2019) showed that “the number of judges [in Washington County] is far below the size of bench needed for a county of over 600,000 in population”. In fact, this analysis indicated that Washington County needed 21 judges vs our current 15.

Senate Bill 1541 proposes to increase the number of Washington County judges to 16 judges effective July 1, 2024. While this will continue to leave us understaffed, it is a start. I urge you to support this bill to protect our county.

Thank you for your consideration.

Susan Pozdena  
Washington County resident (97229)