

Submitter: Brian Stout

On Behalf
Of:

Committee: House Committee On Emergency Management, General
Government, and Veterans

Measure: HB4094

HB4094 - Relating to Courthouses / Capitol Construction Funding
2/13/2024

Good afternoon Chair Grayber, Vice Chair Lewis and Vice Chair Tran and Committee Members.

For the record my name is Brian Stout, State Representative for House District 31 which covers all of Columbia County, Parts of Rural Washington County and a few other small sections in Multnomah and Yamhill County.

Thank you for your time today as I introduce HB 4094 here along with our co-sponsors Representative Wallen and Senator Weber. For the record this exact same bi-partisan bill was introduced by our office last session (HB3581) and passed out of the Judiciary Committee without any opposition though it did not get a chance to make it through the entire process for a floor vote.

Last session there were many discussions in sessions surrounding courthouse funding and the many local county issues revolving around keeping and maintaining our court facilities across the state. Our HB4094 is a unique solution addressing some of these concerns and offers another option that currently is missing in statute. This legislation was crafted with input from multiple state legislators, county officials, the Association of Oregon Counties (AOC) and others.

Currently Oregon counties have actively participated in conjunction with Oregon Judicial Department (OJD) in the Oregon Courthouse Capitol Improvement Fund (OCCCI) which allows for the use of Article X1-Q Bonds as a funding mechanism for improvements and upgrades. This program has been a good start and provided some assistance, yet it falls short for many counties and in our view has a very visible gap. In simple terms, the process only allows for the building of a new court facility or the remodel of other buildings that are NOT courthouses. This bill addresses this head on and essentially allows state bond funds to be allowed for the use of large-scale expansions or major renovations of our existing courthouses. Many of courthouses are historic in nature, do not need to be abandoned or level, and frankly deserve better solutions from us in addressing the long-term needs for future generations. Fiscally sound common-sense solutions such as this will provide our counties the flexibility and practical options for state assistance while ensuring our counties are financially committed as well.

With construction cost skyrocketing and stable funding becoming increasingly difficult for our smaller and often rural and underserved communities, I respectfully urge for us to act now. The same applies for even our larger counties that are struggling with the pains of growing communities and the demands that are placed on court services

and existing laws that regulate state courts which are inside the county facilities.
Thank you again for your time and with that I ask that we now hear from our
respected colleagues for additional in-depth details and further explanation of the bill.