



emergence
addiction and behavioral therapies

February 9, 2025

Oregon Senate Judiciary Committee
Senator Floyd Prozanski, Chair
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court Street
Salem, Oregon 97301

Re: Support for additional Judicial Officers for Lane County Circuit Court

Dear Chair Prozanski and Members of the Committee,

As Executive Director at Emergence Addiction and Behavioral Therapies, I see firsthand how important our courts are in shaping the lives of the people we serve. That's why I'm reaching out to ask for your support in approving Chief Justice Flynn's request for two additional judicial officers for the Lane County Circuit Court (2nd Judicial District).

For the past 40 years, Lane County has been served by only 15 judges, even as the population of our county has grown by 30 percent and the work of the court has become more complex. It's time to adjust that number so our judges can continue to serve our community effectively.

These additional judges would make a real difference. They would ease the burden on our current judges, who are working at an unsustainable pace to keep up with increasingly complicated caseloads. Lane County citizens deserve access to justice and the time they need to make their case. And even though our judges are working at a heroic pace, the time constraints in our courts make it harder for our neighbors to get the swift and fair adjudication of cases that they deserve.

More importantly from my vantage point, adding two judges would allow Lane County to continue leading the way in innovative, problem-solving courts. We have long been at the forefront of using specialty courts—like treatment courts, veterans' courts, and mental health courts—to address the root causes of crime, reduce recidivism, help people rebuild their lives, and save taxpayer dollars. We know these courts work. They help people overcome substance use disorders, reunite families, and keep people from cycling in and out of the justice system. When people get the right support through the right court programs, they are far more likely to succeed—and that benefits all of us.

Emergence works closely with the courts, and we see every day how committed our judges are to making real change. They are not just presiding over cases; they are working with attorneys, service providers, and community partners to find solutions that improve lives. We can only do so much with the resources we have, and the

78 Centennial Loop, Unit A
Eugene, Oregon 97401

541.393.0777
541.687.9279 fax

www.4emergence.com



emergence
addiction and behavioral therapies

scarcest resource at present is time on the docket. Two of our greatest criminal challenges in Lane County are impaired driving and domestic violence. Specialty courts are the answer to reducing these scourges to our community, but we lack the judicial capacity to even take the first steps toward creating these programs.

Lane County's judges have proven their ability to lead, innovate, and collaborate for the good of our community. Now, they need our support. Please invest in the future of our justice system by approving these two additional judicial positions. It's a necessary step to ensure that our courts remain strong, accessible, and effective for everyone who needs them.

Thank you for considering my feedback. Please contact me if you have any questions or would like any additional information from my perspective as a behavioral health provider who works closely with our courts. I look forward to working with all of you to build a safer and healthier Oregon where everyone belongs.

Respectfully submitted,

Chris Wig
Executive Director

78 Centennial Loop, Unit A
Eugene, Oregon 97401

541.393.0777
541.687.9279 fax

www.4emergence.com