

## Board of Commissioners



216 S. E. 4<sup>th</sup> Street  
Pendleton, OR 97801

Daniel N. Dorran  
541-278-6201

John M. Shafer  
541-278-6203

Celinda A. Timmons  
541-278-6202

January 2, 2025

The Honorable Floyd Prozanski  
Oregon Senate Judiciary Committee

RE: Senate Bill 95 – Addition of a 6th Judge to the 6th Judicial District

Dear Chair Prozanski and Committee Members:

As the Umatilla County Commissioners, we respectfully ask that you accept this letter as our support of the request for permanent funding for a new Circuit Judge (6th Judge) for the 6th Judicial District, as well as a permanent Referee Judge. The additional judgeship will bring relief to our judges who are currently stressed beyond capacity with oversized caseloads. The last judicial officer was added in 2004, and since then this district has experienced steady and substantial growth in the population, which results in case filings also increasing. This growth in population and use of court resources has created overstressed dockets, which impacts the court and court users of all levels and case types. We witness daily the district continued efforts to work on creating efficiencies with collaboration from community partners. We live in the third most diverse community and the second youngest by average age in the State of Oregon, which means the 6th Judicial District serves a non-monolithic population, in fact the population constitutes one of the most complex in the state by all analytics and measurements.

We watch the 6th Judicial District work magic in scheduling, budgeting, compassion and respect for all involved in Umatilla and Morrow County. Both counties dedicate a strong commitment to our District Attorney's offices while at the same time encouraging a solid and competent public defender team with what we consider success. This only amplifies the overall judicial needs of the 6th Judicial District. Our rural community has seen significant growth since the last addition of a judicial officer (5th Judge) in 2004, and with such growth comes additional responsibilities and need for judicial services and resources. The courts are no longer adequately equipped with the judicial officers needed to efficiently manage the influx of cases. Please consider the 6th Judicial District's (Umatilla and Morrow Counties) request for a new judicial officer and a 1.0 FTE permanently funded Hearings Referee.

Sincerely,

Celinda A. Timmons  
Chair, Board of Commissioners

Daniel N. Dorran  
Commissioner

John M. Shafer  
Commissioner

BCC:bt