



**TO: Sen. Anthony Broadman, Co-Chair
Rep. Paul Evans, Co-Chair
Members of Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Public
Safety**

**FR: Bryan Brock
On behalf of OR District Attorneys Association**

RE: SUPPORT OF HB 5012

February 25, 2025

Thank you for the opportunity to address this committee. On behalf of the Oregon District Attorneys, we support HB 5012, the Oregon Judicial Department budget. As the foundation of the criminal justice system the Judicial Department budget warrants our support overall and we want to specifically support four policy options.

POP 101 (courthouse improvements and security)

Courthouse security is essential to protect judges, attorneys, jurors, court staff, defendants, plaintiffs, and the public. It maintains order, prevents disruptions, and safeguards sensitive information. By prioritizing security, we ensure justice is pursued in a safe and impartial environment.

We find it somewhat shocking that 17 circuit courthouses do not have screening stations. Oregonians have come to expect security screenings as commonplace in this post 911 era. This pilot program to install entrance screening in eight counties is a move in the direction we must go.

By prioritizing courthouse security, we uphold the principles of justice, fairness, and the rule of law. It is our collective responsibility to ensure that these public institutions remain a sanctuary where justice can be pursued without fear.

POP 102 (Judicial Salaries)

It is important to address the disparity in judges' salaries, which currently stand 30% below competitive rates. This gap undermines our judicial system's effectiveness and threatens its integrity. By increasing judges' salaries to match competitive rates, we can:

1. Attract highly qualified and experienced legal professionals to the bench, ensuring a judiciary of the highest caliber.
2. Reduces the risk of undue influence and financial pressures, allowing judges to make fair and unbiased decisions.
3. Demonstrate the respect and value we place on the crucial role judges play in upholding justice and the rule of law.

Competitive salaries for our judges are needed to maintain a healthy and respected judicial system and we strongly support this option.

POP 106 (continued funding for unrepresented management)

The failure to provide attorneys to those that qualify has become one of the top priorities in Oregon. This funding focuses on the priority courts that have the highest unrepresented caseloads and is money well spent. The *Betschart* decision has made it clear that we need to prioritize appointing attorneys to in-custody defendants, and this funding does exactly that. By coordinating the courts and OPDC the work funded by this option has properly focused resources where most needed. This is a short-term need but for now an importing piece in ensuring Oregonians fundamental rights.

POP 108 (New Judges and Support Staff)

It is well established that Oregon's judicial positions fall short of the workload. The National Center for State Courts has identified a critical shortage of 33 judges in Oregon in a study conducted back in 2015. This shortage continues today and impacts the efficiency and effectiveness of our judicial system. By adding more judges, we can address:

1. **Case Backlogs:** Additional judges will help expedite the resolution of cases, reducing the time individuals and businesses spend waiting for their day in court.
2. **Improve Access to Justice:** With more judges, we can ensure that all citizens have timely access to the legal system, upholding the principle of justice for all.
3. **Enhance Judicial Efficiency:** A well-staffed judiciary can handle cases more efficiently, ensuring that legal proceedings are conducted smoothly and without unnecessary delays.

The District Attorneys of Oregon support the addition of judges in Oregon to strengthen our judicial system and ensure that justice is served promptly and fairly.

Thank you for your time and the opportunity to support those areas the Oregon District Attorneys believe are critical to the success of the Judicial system in Oregon.