



Co-Chair Broadman, Co-Chair Evans, and Members of the Committee,

For the record, my name is Pablo Nieves-Valenzuela. I am a government relations manager for Washington County. I am here today to testify in support of HB 5012, and specifically to urge your support for funding Washington County's Courthouse Replacement Planning Project, and funding for county law libraries.

Courthouse Replacement Planning Project

Washington County has participated in the prioritization process conducted by the Courthouse Facilities Task Force and was ranked for the second biennium in a row as a priority in the list of planning projects recommended to the Legislature. Washington County's Board of County Commissioners has also included this project as a top priority in their Legislative Agenda for the last three biennia.

Our courthouse is too small to meet the needs of our growing community, and it is seismically unsafe. According to an analysis from OJD, Washington County needs three additional judicial officers to keep up with our caseloads. Unfortunately, the current courthouse lacks the space for more courtrooms, judges, and staff, meaning that our workforce is left with overwhelmingly large caseloads that lead to significant delays in accessing justice. Also, in the event of a major earthquake, at least one of our two connected courthouse buildings would likely pull away from the other and cause structural damage that would threaten the safety of those inside.

The goal for our project is to plan for a safety compliant facility with enough courtrooms to allow for timely access to justice across our county. With that in mind, we are respectfully requesting your support for the \$1.25 million included in POP 118 for this project.

Law Library Services

I also want to highlight Washington County's support for additional funding to support county law libraries. Law libraries are a vital public resource that enhances equal access to justice by ensuring that legal information, resources, and tools are readily available and accessible to everyone.

Law libraries offer critical information to our residents, including information about jury duty, eviction, divorce, expungement, and many other common legal processes. This information is particularly useful for lower income community members who are trying to navigate the justice system.

We appreciate OJD's recommendation for continued funding to county law libraries, and want to bring your attention to challenges that many law libraries are currently facing. Prior to 2011, Law Library revenue was generated from a portion of filing fees collected and distributed by each county's respective courts. In the 2011-2013 biennium, this changed to be an appropriation through the OJD as part of the state legislature's biennial budget. Since then, several law libraries have relied on funding they had left over from before 2011 to supplement funding received by the state in order to maintain services; unfortunately, that leftover funding is nearly depleted, and without additional investment on top of the \$8.7 million included in this budget, we will see major cuts across many of our programs that would disproportionately impact lower-income Oregonians. That is why county law libraries collaborated to determine that a "no cuts" budget for county law libraries would require approximately \$11.5 million, and we urge your support for that level of funding.

Thank you very much for your consideration. I would be happy to answer any questions.

Pablo Nieves-Valenzuela
Government Relations Manager
Washington County
(971)-917-6953
Pablo_Nieves-Valenzuela@washingtoncountyor.gov