



HARRIS ♦ VELÁZQUEZ ♦ GIBBENS

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Re: HB2614

My name is Joe Beck, and I'm the lead criminal attorney/shareholder at Harris Velazquez Gibbens, as well as the executive director of the Oregon Defense Attorney Consortium (ODAC) in Washington County. In that capacity, I've been asked to relay my thoughts on HB2614, specifically the short extension of the sunset provision as it relates to consortium, as opposed to a longer extension and/or elimination of the sunset entirely.

In Washington County, ODAC provides a significant percentage of the county's indigent defense representation, and it is made up (per both our judges and district attorney's office) of some of the highest quality and most experienced attorneys in the jurisdiction, who are in large part willing to do the work they do because of the structure and stability the ODAC model provides. Should this model no longer exist (or should there be uncertainty about the existence of that model in the near future), it is likely that a number of these attorneys, whose expertise the county (and more importantly defendants) desperately needs will pivot to a different career path altogether, as opposed to shifting towards the individual contracting model being discussed.

Moreover, the "hybrid" approach (mix of indigent defense and retained work) that ODAC subscribes to has allowed the consortium to attract and train younger attorneys, who get the benefit of doing higher volume indigent defense under the supervision of more experienced attorneys, while also having opportunities to supplement their income through retained work. This ability to recruit and train (again, per both the bench and state) has been a resounding success, as it has resulted in providing defendants with high quality representation from younger attorneys, who have developed a passion for the work through their experience with ODAC. The uncertainty surrounding the future of consortia will limit our ability to continue this development-focused approach, as positions will naturally be less appealing to newer attorneys without the promise of stability.

Additionally, with the proposed shift to individual contracting, the attorneys currently getting the benefit of training from more experienced lawyers will no longer have those resources available to them, which will ultimately result in a decreased quality of representation for defendants. This is something that can already be seen (as evidenced by my discussions with others in the community), as individuals who would normally be drawn towards a firm (or even a non-profit), are now practicing on their own without the proper foundation to provide adequate representation.

To conclude, a lengthier extension of the sunset (or preferably an elimination of it altogether) would allow ODAC (and other consortium) to continue to recruit and train high younger attorneys who will add to the legal community, as well as continue to provide high quality representation from more experienced attorneys, who have been the main reason the unrepresented crisis isn't worse than it currently is (see Clackamas County).

I appreciate the time of those reading this, and if more information would be helpful, I would be happy to provide it.

Sincerely,



Joe Beck

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