

Submitter: Rachel Schutz
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Judiciary
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3180

Dear Members of the House Judiciary Committee,

I am writing to express my strong support for HB3180, which would provide necessary funding for the replacement of the Washington County Courthouse. As one of the fastest-growing counties in Oregon, Washington County's judicial system is under immense pressure, and without an updated facility, our ability to deliver justice fairly and effectively is at risk.

One of the most pressing concerns with the current courthouse is the severe lack of space and capacity to accommodate our judges, judicial staff, and the increasing caseload. Courtrooms are overcrowded, leading to significant delays in hearings, increasing stress on judicial staff, and ultimately, impeding the timely administration of justice. Judges struggle to allocate sufficient time to hear cases thoroughly, impacting the quality of rulings and limiting opportunities to engage meaningfully with victims, who need support at a critical time in their lives. As a point of comparison, judges in Multnomah County are able to spend an average of 60 minutes per case, whereas judges in Washington County are able to spend 10.

As our community continues to grow, the demand for court services will only increase, further exacerbating these challenges unless we act now to modernize our courthouse.

Additionally, a high-functioning and trauma-informed court system is essential for survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and other crimes. The existing courthouse does not provide an environment that adequately supports survivors as they navigate the legal process. Modern courthouses are designed to prioritize privacy, safety, and accessibility, incorporating separate waiting areas, secure entrances, and private consultation rooms for survivors to meet with advocates and legal representatives. A modernized facility would ensure that survivors are met with dignity, security, and the resources they need to seek justice without fear or re-traumatization.

In my role at the Family Justice Center, I see every day the impact that a stressful and re-traumatizing court process has on survivors. It is essential that we provide our community with the resources necessary to ensure that our court is responsive, accommodating, and trauma-informed.

The replacement of the Washington County Courthouse is not just a matter of convenience—it is a necessity for the well-being of our judicial system and the

community it serves. I urge you to support HB3180 and invest in the future of Washington County's courts, ensuring that justice is administered fairly, efficiently, and with the care that victims and all members of our community deserve.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I respectfully request your support for HB3180.

Sincerely,

Rachel Schutz, Executive Director
Family Justice Center of Washington County