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March 18, 2025

Dear Members of the Legislature:

I submit this letter in support of HB 3180. My family law practice is now located in downtown Portland, but I began my career in Washington County and continue to practice there regularly. I also sit on the Washington County Family Law Bench-Bar Committee.

I ask that the Legislature support HB 3180 for several reasons:

1. Washington County has been and is one of the fastest growing counties in the state. Per U.S. Census data, between 1970 and 2020 the population increased by nearly four-fold, from just under 158,000 to just over 600,000. As the population in the county continues to grow, the present court—and justice system—approaches a crisis point.
2. The existing courthouse is overcrowded. There are not enough courtrooms for all of the current judges in the county, let alone for future judges (as the population growth continues) and for volunteer pro tempore judges who handle many first appearance dockets for protective order cases. There is only one attorney-client conference room in the entire facility. There is no room for onsite advocates for survivors of domestic violence, and no room for on-site drop-in childcare for the public to utilize while they attend to court business. There is insufficient room for judicial settlement conferences.
3. The existing courthouse is outdated. It has not been seismically upgraded, and to do so would cost millions. Accessibility for those with disabilities in most cases meets the most basic required standards, but there are areas of certain courtrooms that are inaccessible to those who require power wheelchairs for mobility (jury boxes and witness stands, for instance). The technology in most areas of the courthouse is outdated and difficult to navigate for most attorneys and litigants.
4. A new and modern courthouse would serve as a symbol of renewed equity and enduring justice. It would also further stimulate continued economic development in the state's second most populous county, and meet the needs of current and future residents.

I am hopeful that you will take this large step forward by supporting HB 3180.

Sincerely,


James A. King
Attorney at Law