

<b>Date:</b>	<b>April 18th, 2025</b>
<b>To:</b>	Co-Chairs Nosse and Girod, and Members of the Capital Construction Subcommittee of the Joint Committee on Ways & Means
<b>From:</b>	Association of Oregon Counties Legislative Affairs Manager, Justin Low
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Support – SB 5505, County Courthouse Bonds</b>

For the record, my name is Justin Low, and I am a Legislative Affairs Manager for the Association of Oregon Counties (AOC). Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of SB 5505—specifically, the authorization of \$175.35 million total in state matching Article XI-Q bonds for county courthouse replacement projects.

AOC is a non-partisan member organization that advocates on issues that unite all county governing bodies and have an impact on county functions, governance, budgets, and services. The service relevant to my testimony today involves close collaboration with the Oregon Judicial Department (OJD), with whom Oregon counties partner with to provide courtrooms and office space for the state’s Circuit Court system.

When a county courthouse needs replacement, usually due to age, deterioration of structures, inability to meet safety standards, and-or the need for a seismic stable building, the cost to replace any particular courthouse typically far outweighs the amount of county or local funds available each budget cycle. So, as a wonderful example of the state-county partnership at its best, AOC and OJD work together each biennium to facilitate a prioritization process to determine which county projects should be first in line to receive available funding for courthouse replacement. Once a prioritization list is created and included in the Chief Justice’s recommended budget, the courthouse replacement projects are eventually included in the DAS bond bill that we are testifying on today.

That is when it is up to the state to make critical investments to facilitate the capital construction of county courthouses through the authorization of state bonds; and as a pre-requisite for county courthouses to make AOC and OJD’s prioritization list, these counties must be able to provide matching funds equivalent to the bond amounts. Therefore, it is an evenly shared financial responsibility between the state and county to fund these replacement projects. That being said, these state investments are extremely important because even our most well-resourced counties would face significant hardship trying to replace a courthouse alone without state matching funds.

In conclusion, AOC requests that the Committee support the full authorization of bond requests in SB 5505 for Hood River County Courthouse at \$85.8 million, Morrow County Courthouse at \$2.55 million, and Umatilla County Courthouse at \$87 million. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Justin Low  
Legislative Affairs Manager for Governance and Revenue