

FROM (DEPT/ DIVISION): County Counsel

SUBJECT: Letter of Support

<p>Background:</p> <p>The presiding judge and Oregon Judicial Department have begun the process to request the legislature for a sixth 6<sup>th</sup> Judicial District judge, including the funding for staffing. The Board has been requested to submit a letter of support for the legislative proposal. The letter of support is before the Board for review and approval.</p>	<p>Requested Action:</p> <p>Approve and authorize signing of the letter of support</p>
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ATTACHMENTS : Sample Letter of Support

\*\*\*\*\*For Internal Use Only\*\*\*\*\*

Checkoffs:

- ( ) Dept. Heard (copy)
- ( ) Human Resources (copy)
- ( X ) Legal (copy)
- ( ) (Other - List:)

To be notified of Meeting:

Needed at Meeting:

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Scheduled for meeting on: January 2, 2025

Action taken:

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Follow-up:

January 2, 2025

The Honorable [ENTER NAME HERE]

Oregon Senate Judiciary Committee

RE: Senate Bill [ENTER NUMBER HERE] – Addition of a 6<sup>th</sup> Judge to the 6<sup>th</sup> Judicial District

Dear Chair [ENTER NAME HERE] and Committee Members:

As [ENTER ROLE AND ANY AFFILIATED COMPANIES HERE]; I respectfully submit this letter in support of the request for permanent funding for a new Circuit Judge (6<sup>th</sup> Judge) for the 6<sup>th</sup> Judicial District, as well as a permanent Referee Judge. The additional judgeship will bring relief to our judges who are currently stressed beyond capacity with oversized caseloads. The last judicial officer was added in 2004, and since then this district has experienced steady and substantial growth in the population, which results in case filings also increasing. Said growth in population and use of court resources has created overstressed dockets, which impacts the court and court users of all levels and case types. The district continues to work on creating efficiencies with collaboration from community partners, however the need is still great, and our communities deserve to have access to quality, timely, and efficient court resources.

Efforts to create efficiencies in the dockets are time consuming and are a temporary fix, to truly make an impact and address the need with a long-term effect to alleviate the current pressure, this district requires a 6<sup>th</sup> Judicial officer as well as permanent funding of a 1.0 FTE Hearings Referee. The district has used creative approaches to temporarily relieve some of the pressure the dockets are experiencing. For example, the Presiding Judge implemented the centralization of a growing Aid and Assist docket, this was necessary due to the increasing mental health challenges our community has experienced, our insufficient resources, and the insufficient resources at the Oregon State Hospital. He has used general fund savings to temporarily fund referee judge positions, which have proven to provide relief in the past, however without continued funding it is difficult to recruit for a temporary position at this level.

In closing, our rural community has seen significant growth since the last addition of a judicial officer (5<sup>th</sup> Judge) in 2004, and with such growth comes additional need for judicial services and resources; the courts are no longer adequately equipped with the judicial officers needed to efficiently manage the influx of cases. Please consider the 6<sup>th</sup> Judicial District's (Umatilla and Morrow Counties) request for a new judicial officer and a 1.0 FTE permanently funded Hearings Referee.

Respectfully,

[ENTER NAME, ROLE HERE]

[ENTER ORGANIZATION (IF ANY) HERE]