



**Commissioner Nick Fish**  
City of Portland

January 30, 2015

Representative Jeff Barker, Chair  
House Committee on Judiciary  
Oregon State Legislature  
900 Court St. NE, Hearing Room 343  
Salem, OR 97301

RE: HB 2700

Dear Chair Barker and Members of the Committee:

I write to express my strong and enthusiastic support for HB 2700, authorizing the courts to direct that unclaimed damages be used to fund Legal Aid. I am pleased the entire Portland City Council supports this bill in our 2015 Legislative Agenda.

The concept of using unclaimed class action awards to create an endowment fund for Legal Aid Services is an innovative way to better serve Oregon's most vulnerable families, while ensuring that wrongdoers are held accountable for their actions.

This is not a radical idea: 48 other states have already adopted similar legislation directing unclaimed class action funds to be put to public purpose.

For me, this issue is deeply personal. As a City Commissioner and former practicing lawyer, I am a passionate supporter of Legal Aid Services of Oregon. Equal justice under the law demands that everyone in our community has access to justice. We cannot allow a two-tiered system of laws—one for the wealthy, and one for the rest of us.

When I moved to Oregon in 1996, I learned early on about the critically important work of Legal Aid Services of Oregon. I contributed to the Campaign for Equal Justice and joined its Advisory Council. The Campaign raises private funds to support the work of Legal Aid.

Unfortunately, even with the success of the Campaign, only 15 percent of eligible clients in Oregon can be served. That means women who are victims of domestic violence, workers with wage claims, and families facing eviction do not get the representation they need and deserve.

HB 2700 would be a “game changer,” directing tens of millions of dollars into an endowment fund for Legal Aid. It will ensure that thousands of deserving Oregon families receive quality legal services. And it will create a lasting legacy.

HB 2700 is an opportunity to advance our shared values of civil rights, equal justice, and basic fairness. I urge you to support it.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nick Fish". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Nick Fish

cc: Representative Jennifer Williamson  
Representative Tobias Read  
Portland City Council  
Martha Pellegrino, Government Relations Director