



Oregon

Kate Brown, Governor

Department of Human Services

Office of the Director

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Dear Co-Chairs Winters and Stark and Members of the Ways and Means Public Safety Subcommittee,

I am writing in support of the work of the Oregon Public Defense Services (OPDS). The Department of Human Services (DHS) works closely with OPDS to ensure that children and families in Oregon have access to a fair and balanced court system.

Critical Issues addressed by OPDS services include:

- Public defenders represent vulnerable Oregonians, those who experience poverty and, in many cases, struggle with mental health and drug and alcohol issues. Because of their relationship with clients, public defenders have a unique opportunity to advocate for the needs of their clients.
- Within the child welfare system, attorneys who represent parents and children are important partners in assuring children and youth in foster care are safe.
- Lawyers representing parents and children are critical to protecting the rights of families.

We have been pleased to work with OPDS on the recommendations of the Governor's Task Force on Juvenile Dependency, an outgrowth of SB 222 and a collaboration between DHS, OPDS, the Judicial Department, the Department of Justice, CASA and others.

OPDS is a valuable partner and its attorneys play an important role in supporting child safety. We look forward to continued work with OPDS in the future.

Sincerely,

Clyde Saiki
Director