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February 9, 2017

Representative Jeff Barker  
Chair, House Judiciary Committee

**RE: Letter of Support for HB 2605 (New judgeship for Josephine County)**

Dear Chair Barker and Committee Members:

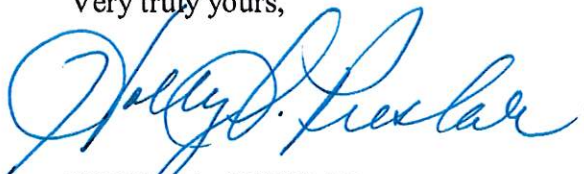
I am writing this letter in support of HB 2605 and a request for a new judgeship in Josephine County. I have been an attorney in Grants Pass for the past 25 years, and I am the Board President and contract administrator for Josephine County Defense Lawyers, Inc. (JCDL), a consortium presently of 10 attorneys who provide court appointed counsel in Josephine County in juvenile delinquency proceedings, juvenile dependency proceedings, civil commitment proceedings, and adult criminal cases when the public defender's office is otherwise unable to be assigned. I have been a participating attorney member of JCDL for over 23 years, and the Board President/contract administrator for approximately the past 18 years. Since I also maintain a private practice, I also represent retained clients in Josephine County on family law matters, including divorce and custody cases, restraining order matters, and child support cases.

Over the past many years, we have seen the impact on our court due to the lack of sufficient judicial resources in our community. This has in part been caused by a significant increase in the filing of juvenile dependency cases by the Oregon Department of Human Services, Child Welfare. In just one year from 2015 to 2016, we have seen the number of permanency hearings increase by approximately 50%. This presents a clear burden on an already over-taxed court system. Additionally, termination of parental rights case filings have increased by nearly 50% as well in the past year (from 2015 to 2016). Since these cases take legal priority on the court's docket, the impact to the ability of our four judges to timely hear other types of civil cases, including family law matters, has been significant. It is not uncommon for clients trying to obtain a divorce or be granted custody of their children to have to wait a year or more for their day in court. This leads to further struggles for those folks, such as increase in attorney fees and costs, being unable to sell their homes, or pay outstanding debts, and the like. It is incredibly stressful for them and their families, including their children, when custody and parenting time issues cannot be resolved sooner. The addition of another judge would vastly improve the ability to have these matters resolved sooner for our clients.

We are also at such a critical point with the docketing of cases here in Josephine County that our judges are having to re-set even juvenile dependency permanency hearings in order to hear initial juvenile dependency jurisdictional hearings due to the fact that at times there is simply not an available judge to do both. This has the impact of negatively effecting children who deserve to have permanency in their lives sooner, and delays children and families from getting adequate services until their cases have been adjudicated.

I urge you to consider Josephine County's need for a new judgeship, and thank you for your consideration.

Very truly yours,



HOLLY A. PRESLAR