

**TESTIMONY OF CHIEF JUSTICE MARTHA WALTERS**  
**House Bill 3388**  
**House Judiciary Committee**  
**March 28, 2019**

Madam Chair, vice-chairs, and members of the committee, I am Martha Walters, Chief Justice of the Oregon Supreme Court. Thank you for quickly scheduling this important bill.

HB 3388 would revise the salary structure for our state court judges and repeal the statutory connection between legislator salaries and judicial salaries.

I appeared before this committee in January to support HB 2238. The judicial salary provisions in this bill are the same as HB 2238, and would set Oregon judicial salaries at no less than a specified percentage of U.S. District Court judge's salary. I have submitted a copy of my testimony and exhibits from HB 2238 for your consideration.

Passing HB 3388 would:

- Appropriately compensate your state judges for the legally complex and emotionally challenging work that they do. Whether it is working through layers of criminal sentencing laws, complying with complex and frequently-changing state and federal laws in child welfare cases, or helping married couples with children equitably and peacefully dissolve their marriages, we need skilled judges on the bench.
- Reduce turnover on the bench. About 40 percent of our judges are new in the last five years. Increasing compensation will promote retention of our most experienced judges.
- Address the current structure where public-sector lawyers are paid significantly more than the judges they appear before. This creates an inappropriate dynamic in the courtroom and acts as a dis-incentive to encourage those highly-skilled advocates in a career on the bench.
- Finally, adopting a formula for judicial compensation will eliminate the need to ask you to set specific salaries every year.

Section 7 of HB 3388 contains a provision that was not in the previous bill. It would permanently disconnect judicial salaries from legislative salaries. I would encourage you to decide judicial salaries without having to consider the impact on your own salary structure and compensation.

I want to personally thank the members of this committee and others who sponsored HB 3388, and for the legislature for the improvements you have made in judicial compensation over the past few years. The increases that you have made have been extremely important in keeping our veteran judges on the bench. But we have not fixed the problem and it continues to be a pressing issue.