



FROM THE OFFICES OF THE
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Committee Advances Investments, Oversight to Resolve Unrepresented Crisis

In partnership with new agency leadership, budget focuses on increasing current capacity, training new public defenders, expanding oversight

SALEM, Ore. – Today, the Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Public Safety approved critical investments, initiatives, and oversight requirements for the Public Defense Commission to help resolve the unrepresented crisis amid a tough budget cycle with limited available resources.

The agency's budget ([House Bill 5031](#)) was crafted in close coordination with new Public Defense Commission leadership, which has recently released a detailed plan to resolve the crisis.

The Legislature's investments are aimed at ensuring that attorneys who can take on more cases are able to, that law schools are training the next generation of public defenders, and that the public is kept up to date on progress to resolve the crisis.

"Oregon's unrepresented persons crisis is unacceptable. We have an ethical and constitutional responsibility to protect victims of crime and provide appropriate public defense to people who cannot afford it," said **Sen. Anthony Broadman (D-Bend)**, co-chair of the Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Public Safety. "The agency has the resources, and now the plan, in response

to the Governor's direction, to end this crisis. We will ensure accountability and the agency understands the urgency of the situation Oregonians are facing."

New and continued investments include:

- \$2.2 million for an Enhanced Provider Capacity Pilot Program, which would target resources to compensate for increased attorney caseloads in the six crisis counties: Multnomah, Washington, Marion, Jackson, Douglas, and Coos.
- \$3.4 million to Oregon law schools to provide training and supervision of law students to undertake misdemeanor cases. This initiative is expected to train a total of 120 law students to provide public defense services for 1,060 misdemeanor cases.
- \$492,865 for a dedicated position in the Adult Trial Representation Division for expedited resolution of case dockets in Multnomah, Washington, and Marion counties.
- \$567,182 for two case assignment coordinators to increase the number of cases that can be assigned.

The budget winds down the Temporary Hourly Increase Program (THIP) which was deemed an inefficient and overly expensive method of providing public defense. However, attorneys with clients whose cases will continue into the next biennium will still receive state support to do that work.

Legislators also created a new key performance measure related to the percentage of financially eligible people receiving a public defender. The target for the KPM is 100%, and the agency must report to the Legislature in 2026 with a comprehensive restructuring of their key performance measures for the 2027-29 biennium.

Other new oversight reporting requirements include:

- Reports in January and September next year on agency restructuring and the implementation of the Commission's "12-month plan to address the number of unrepresented Oregonians."
- A report during the 2027 legislative session on the legislative investment in law schools, including the total number of students trained, clients served, as well as case outcomes.

"The fact that 4,000 Oregonians are facing criminal charges without legal representation is a stain on this state, and an alarming erosion of these Oregonians' constitutional rights," said **Rep. Paul Evans (D-Monmouth)**, co-chair of the Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Public Safety. "It represents a system-wide breakdown that must be addressed with urgency and gravity. HB 5031 provides the resources to allow OPDC leaders to do the difficult work of recruiting, training, and retaining public defenders so that no one stands alone in a court of law."

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