



PRESS RELEASE

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Plea Deal Reform Passes the House

Legislation would restrict the waiver of certain rights in plea agreements

SALEM – The Oregon House of Representatives today unanimously passed [House Bill 4149](#) which seeks to reform and make more fair the plea deals prosecutors often offer defendants in criminal cases.

Rep. Jennifer Williamson (D-Portland), a longtime champion of criminal justice reform, chief sponsored the legislation after receiving a copy of an eight-page plea deal from a misdemeanor case in Multnomah County. Among the rights that plea deal took away were: the defendant’s right to challenge a conviction based on new exculpatory evidence; the right to challenge a sentence as unconstitutionally cruel and unusual; and the right to file a writ of habeas corpus.

“I believe it is our job as legislators and policy makers to ensure we safeguard individual liberties and protect the basic rights of all our citizens,” Rep. Williamson said. “We need to make sure that our justice system works for everyone, and is fair for everyone.”

House Bill 4149 would prohibit a plea agreement from being predicated on a defense attorney stipulating the unconstitutionality of an existing law. It also prohibits a release agreement from being predicated on the defendant’s waiver of appearance at trial.

“Though there is still more work to be done on this issue, these are significant changes to remedy injustices that we know about now,” Rep. Williamson added. “I believe this is the right step in ensuring that the ideals and policies that we have been working on as a legislature align with our criminal justice system.”

Sen. James Manning (D-Eugene) joins Rep. Williamson as a chief sponsor of the legislation. Additional sponsors include Rep. Janelle Bynum (D-Happy Valley), Rep. Mitch Greenlick (D-Portland), Rep. Diego Hernandez (D-Portland), Rep. Paul Holvey (D-Eugene), Rep. Sheri Malstrom (D-Beaverton), Rep. Susan McLain (D-Forest Grove), Rep. Rob Nosse (D-Portland), Rep. Karin Power (D-Milwaukie), Rep. Dan Rayfield (D-Corvallis), Rep. Andrea Salinas (D-Lake Oswego), and Rep. Tawna Sanchez (D-Portland).

The bill now goes to the Oregon Senate for consideration.

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