

## **2019 Sample Letter to Legislator Oregon State Bar**

Dear Senator /Representative \_\_\_\_\_

I am writing to urge you to support adequate funding for Oregon's courts – a core function of state government and crucial to maintaining a healthy climate for nonprofits in Oregon. As you know, the judicial branch budget was reduced significantly in recent years. Inadequate funding will hurt our already weakened court system by limiting access to justice, and creating a "wild west" climate where resolution of disputes is unpredictable. Effectively, justice delayed becomes justice denied.

Why does the judicial branch budget matter to Oregon nonprofit organizations? Courts are critical to thousands of Oregonians. A healthy court system provides certainty for organizations providing services to Oregonians throughout the state. Courts help families reconnect, Oregonians receive services, and businesses and nonprofit organizations manage disputes.

While Oregon's economy has rebounded in many ways, Oregon's court system remain underfunded leading to court closures and inadequate staffing. Even with the lowest unemployment rate in decades, courts across the state still have to limit hours. With each cut a "new normal" forms a baseline for further cuts. The "new normal" is not adequate for businesses in Oregon – even without further cuts Oregon's courts would need increased funding to fulfill their constitutional role to provide justice completely and without delay.

Oregon's courts are more efficient today than in earlier years. Our court system today manages an increasing complex caseload with fewer employees. Like many organizations however, laying off employees and shifting responsibilities creates new difficulties. The courts are making do with fewer resources, but there are limits to how thin resources can be stretched.

Oregon's courts must be adequately funded to ensure access to justice to all Oregonians. The public must trust the commitment of its courts to fairness, to the timely and efficient resolution of disputes, and to an open court system accessible to all. Courts ensure public safety, protect vulnerable citizens, and resolve the problems of families in crisis. The court system has increased efficiencies and streamlined processes, however we have reached a point with court closures and staff reductions where access to justice will no longer exist for businesses or individuals.

Please support adequate funding for the justice system to ensure all citizens of Oregon have access to justice.

Thanks for your consideration of these issues.