

## View results

Respondent

48

Anonymous

25:53

Time to complete

1. Full Name \*

Sean Coyne

2. Organization/Entity Name \*

Crux Private Eye LLC

3. Email \*

sean@cruxprivateeye.com

4. Phone Number \*

9713618369

5. Public Comments must be directly related to agenda items for this meeting. Please specify which agenda topic your comments will relate to below. \*

Budget

6. What type of public comment are you submitting? \*

☒

Written

☐

Verbal - Virtually Via Zoom

## 7. Written Public Comment

If you'd like to submit attachments, please send them to [info@opdc.state.or.us](mailto:info@opdc.state.or.us) in addition to filling out this form

Commissioners,

Once again, I find myself addressing this body to speak about the same issue we've been raising for years—investigator compensation.

At this point, I've lost count of how many times I or my colleagues have stood before this commission to talk about fair pay. We've come here with data, with personal stories, and with a simple ask: adjust our rates to reflect what investigators were paid in 1985—not in nominal dollars, but adjusted for inflation. That would mean \$75 an hour. We're not asking for more than what was already deemed fair decades ago. We're just asking to be brought in line with that standard in today's terms.

There have been promises—some of them quite vocal—made by former commissioners to address this. We were told that change was coming. That we were seen. That this work matters. But here we are, still waiting. Meanwhile, costs continue to rise, and talented investigators are being pushed out of the work. The result? Fewer resources for public defenders, weaker investigations, and ultimately, poorer outcomes for indigent clients.

I urge you to break from the pattern of delay and unkept commitments. You have the power to act. Use it. Set a fair rate that reflects the value and historical precedent of this work. Don't let another year go by where we're still stuck behind 1985.

I am prepared to participate in a coordinated work action if that's what it takes to be heard. I say this out of necessity. We are out of time, out of patience, and out of options. This system cannot function without us. It's time for our compensation to reflect that reality.

Thank you.

## 8. Additional Notes

## View results

Respondent

49

Anonymous

02:51

Time to complete

### 1. Full Name \*

Olcott Thompson

### 2. Organization/Entity Name \*

Marion County Association of Defenders

### 3. Email \*

mcaddir@gmail.com

### 4. Phone Number \*

503 581 6881

### 5. Public Comments must be directly related to agenda items for this meeting. Please specify which agenda topic your comments will relate to below. \*

qualification standards

### 6. What type of public comment are you submitting? \*

☒

Written

☐

Verbal - Virtually Via Zoom

### 7. Written Public Comment

If you'd like to submit attachments, please send them to [info@opdc.state.or.us](mailto:info@opdc.state.or.us) in addition to filling out this form

sending a letter

### 8. Additional Notes

# MARION COUNTY ASSOCIATION OF DEFENDERS

MCAD

187 HIGH STREET, STE 300

SALEM, OR 97301

EMAIL: [MCADLAW@GMAIL.COM](mailto:MCADLAW@GMAIL.COM)

[WWW.MCADLAW.COM](http://WWW.MCADLAW.COM)

OLCOTT THOMPSON— EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

LISA RICHARDSON — OFFICE MANAGER

CELL: 971-345-7612

TEL. (503) 990-8168

FAX (503) 339-1967

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July 12, 2025

Chair Nash  
Vice Chair Mandiberg  
Members of the Commission

MCAD is pleased to see that the statement of intent in the present proposed qualification standards is that everyone who has a current qualification level remains at that level. I am not sure how someone who is currently a level 3 attorney without doing a bunch more work can recertify they are a level 3 attorney.

What would happen at MCAD if everyone had to recertify within six months as the proposed qualification standards were adopted as proposed in June is 13 of the 25 lawyers who are more than just misdemeanor qualified would drop in their level of qualification. A further report follows on the next page.

I still think there needs to be a rewrite for requalification and unless and until the agency has the staff to process the requalifications which it candidly admits it does not and will not until at least 2 years from now and for which I commend it requalification should be removed. It does no one any good to require something that cannot happen. Given that the training requirements have been removed so should the requalification requirements. Both can be added when they are possible to complete.

The commission and the agency also need to remember that the proposed standards will lengthen the time for an attorney to "move up" further exacerbating the unrepresented issues.

What we found at MCAD

Regarding the requalification requirement in the June proposed standards, I conducted a survey of the MCAD members regarding the proposed qualification standards and whether they would be able to requalify at their present level by the end of 2025 (in the six months the standards say everyone must initially requalify).

MCAD has six attorneys who are misdemeanor only qualified. They are ok.

Of the remaining 25 members, three are speciality court only attorneys all of whom are major felony qualified. None of them have tried a case in years because speciality court attorneys do not try cases. They are all major felony qualified which they must be to handle the cases in their speciality court and under the proposed standards they will be misdemeanor only qualified. I expect all three will leave public defense if the proposed standards are adopted.

We also have another major felony qualified attorney who has a 85% speciality court case load. That attorney would probably not leave but would drop to a level 2 attorney and could no longer handle speciality court cases.

Of our five minor felony qualified attorneys, two would drop to a level 1 attorney.

We have 16 members who are major felony qualified, four of whom are discussed above in the context of speciality courts. Of the remaining 12, one would no longer be able to handle JLAW cases and five will drop to level 2 attorneys.

Of our four murder qualified attorneys one will lose their level 4 qualification.

The bottom line as indicated above:

25 attorneys who are greater than misdemeanor only qualified  
13 will drop in their qualifications

Thank you again from the statement of intent. Please remove the requalification requirement because the agency does not have the staff to complete it.



Olcott Thompson

## View results

Respondent

52

Anonymous

02:05

Time to complete

1. Full Name \*

Olcott Thompson

2. Organization/Entity Name \*

D Olcott Thompson PC

3. Email \*

o.thompson@comcast.net

4. Phone Number \*

503 581 6881

5. Public Comments must be directly related to agenda items for this meeting. Please specify which agenda topic your comments will relate to below. \*

Pre-Authorized Expenses

6. What type of public comment are you submitting? \*

☒

Written

☐

Verbal - Virtually Via Zoom

## 7. Written Public Comment

If you'd like to submit attachments, please send them to [info@opdc.state.or.us](mailto:info@opdc.state.or.us) in addition to filling out this form

It appears from the proposed revisions to the Pre-Authorized Expenses, the agency is, again, proposing that attorney travel time not be paid for. That is a severe problem.

As a private attorney I sell my time and my expertise. If someone wants to hire me to represent them in Astoria it will cost that person more than if I was representing them in Salem for the exact same matter. Part of my cost is the time I use to travel to and from Astoria. Time that I could be working (and billing) to other people if I remained in Salem.

Yes, OPDC does not pay for travel time from an office to a courthouse in the same county which has meant, at least in Marion County, some private attorneys will no longer help with unrepresented clients. They are unwilling to donate their travel time from their office to the court annex (15 to 20 minutes one way from downtown where the courthouse is) and from their office to the courthouse. Their retained clients pay for that travel and so should OPDC.

It takes the same 15 to 20 minutes, one way, to go to the jail from downtown Salem. How is that time not part of our regular, routine, meetings with our clients and why should we not continue to get paid for that time.

I am fairly certain that OPDC pays its own trial level attorneys for their travel time as it probably must under employment law. Why is it proposing that others be treated differently?

The effect of adopting this change is present attorneys will need to withdraw from some of their present cases. I personally am not going to donate the 4 to 6 hours of travel each time I visit my client in Roseburg or to be there for his trial.

This change will, also, further reduce any incentive to accept cases being paid by OPDC on an hourly basis. A low rate and 45 days or so to get paid is bad enough. Not getting paid for travel time makes it worse.

## 8. Additional Notes

## View results

Respondent

54

Anonymous

03:04

Time to complete

### 1. Full Name \*

Jeff Dodge

### 2. Organization/Entity Name \*

Falcon Investigations, Inc

### 3. Email \*

jeffdodgepi@yahoo.com

### 4. Phone Number \*

541 337 5959

### 5. Public Comments must be directly related to agenda items for this meeting. Please specify which agenda topic your comments will relate to below. \*

Any increase is appreciated.

### 6. What type of public comment are you submitting? \*

☒ Written

☐ Verbal - Virtually Via Zoom

### 7. Written Public Comment

If you'd like to submit attachments, please send them to [info@opdc.state.or.us](mailto:info@opdc.state.or.us) in addition to filling out this form

The operating costs for self employed investigators is rising all the time. Any increase is appreciated.

### 8. Additional Notes



## View results

Respondent

55

Anonymous

05:22

Time to complete

### 1. Full Name \*

Daniel Kraus

### 2. Organization/Entity Name \*

Mazama Consulting/OALI

### 3. Email \*

mazamaconsulting@gmail.com

### 4. Phone Number \*

503-318-4441

### 5. Public Comments must be directly related to agenda items for this meeting. Please specify which agenda topic your comments will relate to below. \*

OPDC Vendor Compensation

### 6. What type of public comment are you submitting? \*

☒ Written

☐ Verbal - Virtually Via Zoom

### 7. Written Public Comment

If you'd like to submit attachments, please send them to [info@opdc.state.or.us](mailto:info@opdc.state.or.us) in addition to filling out this form

A \$4 dollar an hour increase in compensation for private investigators is inadequate. The disparity between retained cases and indigent defense cases is enormous and is an issue of equity since those with the means to pay an adequate hourly rate get served first. There is an additional disparity and that is with the government investigators, most of whom make a similar hourly rate on their face, but with benefits, retirement, and no expenses, it is a much higher level of compensation. I encourage you to find a higher level of compensation for indigent defense investigators to create pay equity and fairness.

## View results

Respondent

56

Anonymous

07:12

Time to complete

### 1. Full Name \*

Richard I Garbutt

### 2. Organization/Entity Name \*

Garbutt Investigations

### 3. Email \*

rlgarbutt@hotmail.com

### 4. Phone Number \*

5418917741

### 5. Public Comments must be directly related to agenda items for this meeting. Please specify which agenda topic your comments will relate to below. \*

Investigator hourly rate increase

### 6. What type of public comment are you submitting? \*



Written



Verbal - Virtually Via Zoom

### 7. Written Public Comment

If you'd like to submit attachments, please send them to [info@opdc.state.or.us](mailto:info@opdc.state.or.us) in addition to filling out this form

A \$4 increase is an insult when compared with the rates paid by the Feds and civil clients. Remember to get good results protecting persons constitutional rights you need experienced and effective investigators. Nothing on the cheap gets you there. There should be a \$20 hourly increase.

### 8. Additional Notes

## View results

Respondent

57

Anonymous

11:46

Time to complete

### 1. Full Name \*

Frank Rick Mangrum

### 2. Organization/Entity Name \*

International Investigations

### 3. Email \*

rick@iiss.biz

### 4. Phone Number \*

5419818817

### 5. Public Comments must be directly related to agenda items for this meeting. Please specify which agenda topic your comments will relate to below. \*

PI hourly rate increase

### 6. What type of public comment are you submitting? \*



Written



Verbal - Virtually Via Zoom

### 7. Written Public Comment

If you'd like to submit attachments, please send them to [info@opdc.state.or.us](mailto:info@opdc.state.or.us) in addition to filling out this form

I love my work, but I can't make a living at less than \$75.

As investigators we are required to pay out of pocket for everything from health insurance, E&O insurance to cell phones, retirement, office rent and field equipment continuing education, licensing fees and the list goes on and on.

Thank you

## View results

Respondent

58

Anonymous

14:35

Time to complete

### 1. Full Name \*

Lisa Parker

### 2. Organization/Entity Name \*

Parker Investigations and Consulting

### 3. Email \*

lisa@parkerinvestigations.com

### 4. Phone Number \*

5415984577

### 5. Public Comments must be directly related to agenda items for this meeting. Please specify which agenda topic your comments will relate to below. \*

Private Investigator Wages

### 6. What type of public comment are you submitting? \*



Written



Verbal - Virtually Via Zoom

### 7. Written Public Comment

If you'd like to submit attachments, please send them to [info@opdc.state.or.us](mailto:info@opdc.state.or.us) in addition to filling out this form

I am in support of Private investigators getting a substantial wage increase due to the critical, high-skill nature of their work, which ensures public safety, upholds justice, and navigates complex legal and ethical challenges in an increasingly demanding and technologically sophisticated environment. In today's world the assistance they can provide to Defense Attorneys in this shortage is priceless.

Although \$4 increase is better than nothing I do not believe it is in line with Inflation and Cost of Living. Like all professionals, PIs face rising living costs. Many operate as independent contractors, bearing expenses for equipment, insurance, and travel. Higher wages ensure financial stability, allowing them to focus on delivering quality services without economic strain. While retaining good PI in the industry.

## View results

Respondent

59

Anonymous

25:06

Time to complete

### 1. Full Name \*

Kathleen McLaughlin

### 2. Organization/Entity Name \*

Signpost Investigations LLC

### 3. Email \*

km@signpostpi.com

### 4. Phone Number \*

541-240-7654

### 5. Public Comments must be directly related to agenda items for this meeting. Please specify which agenda topic your comments will relate to below. \*

Provider rates

### 6. What type of public comment are you submitting? \*

☒ Written

☐ Verbal - Virtually Via Zoom

### 7. Written Public Comment

If you'd like to submit attachments, please send them to [info@opdc.state.or.us](mailto:info@opdc.state.or.us) in addition to filling out this form

Thank you for taking up the matter of provider rates. When I contacted legislators and asked attorneys to contact legislators and speak out for preserving OPDC's budget, it was with the understanding that OPDC had budgeted for investigators to receive a significant rate increase - \$75/hour. I also understand that OPDC has invested significant hours in setting standards for defense investigators, which would ensure this money is spent on qualified investigators. I see no reason to delay a pay increase for the people who are supporting defendants AND attorney caseloads.

## View results

Respondent

60

Anonymous

67:25

Time to complete

1. Full Name \*

Andrew Borges

2. Organization/Entity Name \*

Borges Investigations, LLC

3. Email \*

borgesinvestigations@gmail.com

4. Phone Number \*

458-223-2945

5. Public Comments must be directly related to agenda items for this meeting. Please specify which agenda topic your comments will relate to below. \*

Budget

6. What type of public comment are you submitting? \*

☒

Written

☐

Verbal - Virtually Via Zoom

## 7. Written Public Comment

If you'd like to submit attachments, please send them to [info@opdc.state.or.us](mailto:info@opdc.state.or.us) in addition to filling out this form

Last year, OPDC commissioned an economic study that found the appropriate market rate for investigators to be \$75/hour. Despite broad support for this rate — including during the recent legislative session — OPDC instituted only a \$4/hour raise, bringing the rate to \$59/hour. The economic study was completed long before OPDC submitted their budget to the legislature. This rate increase fails to reach even the 25th percentile based on the study and remains well below market rates.

\$75/hour reflects what the rate would be had 1980s compensation simply kept pace with inflation- not to mention things like housing and higher education rates that have exceeded inflation. Retained investigative rates in Oregon regularly exceed \$100/hour, and investigators working on federal indigent defense cases are currently paid \$90/hour. The failure to implement the state's own study recommendations — despite spending tax dollars on the analysis — is deeply disappointing.

We are already experiencing a shortage of qualified investigators, and current rates only worsen recruitment and retention. There are experienced, qualified investigators who will take indigent cases at \$75/hour but will not consider it for less. I will not be accepting new OPDC cases for less than \$75/hour, and I am seriously considering ceasing any further work on my current OPDC cases until this issue is meaningfully addressed.

Investigators ceasing indigent work immediately would likely require OPDC to pay for reinvestigation of active cases and cause delays in the courts as proceedings are pushed out to accommodate reinvestigation. This will further deepen Oregon's ongoing unrepresented crisis as these clients remain on the attorney's caseload. This is avoidable — but only if OPDC takes immediate action.

Oregon must do better for its indigent clients. OPDC must act now.

## 8. Additional Notes

## View results

Respondent

61

Anonymous

96:05

Time to complete

1. Full Name \*

Dawn Hartwell

2. Organization/Entity Name \*

Hart 2 Hart Investigations

3. Email \*

dawn@hart2hartinvestigations.com

4. Phone Number \*

503.908.0510

5. Public Comments must be directly related to agenda items for this meeting. Please specify which agenda topic your comments will relate to below. \*

Schedule of Guideline Amounts Update

6. What type of public comment are you submitting? \*

☒

Written

☐

Verbal - Virtually Via Zoom



## 7. Written Public Comment

If you'd like to submit attachments, please send them to [info@opdc.state.or.us](mailto:info@opdc.state.or.us) in addition to filling out this form

I want to thank the OPDC Board Members and supporters for their time and efforts. I am submitting this statement in support of the increase for investigators yet would like to provide information confirming that this still needs to be increased. There has been a flux in people getting licensed and having trouble finding work. Taking the test and passing it does not make you eligible to take responsibility for someone's future and freedom. There is no training provided prior to individuals getting their licenses and very little afterwards unless they have someone to give them the training and guide them through how to do investigations, it just leads to unjust situations. Attorneys aren't investigators. It's like throwing someone who can't swim into the deep end and hoping they figure it out, even if it's standing on the defendant's shoulders to survive. This is not fair to the people we are hired to be defending. How is this justice?

Our agency model provides our investigators training and mentorship. We take our investigators through a 45 hr. "Criminal Defense" investigative academy that is in-class and with homework. We don't get any type of pay for this. We do not send them out on their own. We support them and teach them how to do the investigation and continue to do so. We have been doing this for 8 years now and have struggled through those years to pay our investigators out of the hourly pay from OPDC. It's gotten better, since we started at \$29 per hour and now seeing progress of where we are today.

\$59 an hour is simply too much for an untrained, unqualified person which can adversely affect someone's life. Respectfully, consider the tiers that the workgroups came up with. Pay the more experienced investigators who are able to mentor provisional investigators as they learn the right way to do investigations. We have people ask us all the time to allow them to come to our academy. We have been asked to travel to different areas and provide training for provisional investigators.

That takes time that is not billable. That takes money out of our pockets that we don't see a ROI from.

People keep saying, "Pay us what we deserve" and "Pay us more" yet they haven't earned a pay increase, and they don't want to take on more responsibility. I would like to say, "People who do more should make more so they can do more to help provisional investigators.

There has got to be a better way to do this so that justice is being served to everyone.

Thank you for your time and I pray that this does not fall on deaf ears.

## 8. Additional Notes

This statement comes from Troy and Dawn Hartwell, owners of Hart 2 Hart Investigations.

## View results

Respondent

63

Anonymous

04:04

Time to complete

### 1. Full Name \*

James Comstock

### 2. Organization/Entity Name \*

Defense Investigators of Oregon

### 3. Email \*

jamesbcomstock@gmail.com

### 4. Phone Number \*

503 510 0559

### 5. Public Comments must be directly related to agenda items for this meeting. Please specify which agenda topic your comments will relate to below. \*

Action Item: Schedule of Guideline Amounts Update

### 6. What type of public comment are you submitting? \*

☒

Written

☐

Verbal - Virtually Via Zoom

### 7. Written Public Comment

If you'd like to submit attachments, please send them to [info@opdc.state.or.us](mailto:info@opdc.state.or.us) in addition to filling out this form

I am sending public comment as an attachment by email to the email address provided above. Please confirm receipt. My email has the subject line "Written Comment - Action Item: Schedule of Guideline Amounts Update - Letters"

### 8. Additional Notes

Submitter: Terry Courtney

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee  
On Public Safety

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB5031

Hello: I am writing to support POP 104 and the increase in investigator pay. Part of Oregon's indigent defense crisis is the inability to retain experienced investigators due to the poor rate of pay. In 1985 investigators were paid \$25/hour. The equivalent of that rate today is \$75/hour. The current rate is \$55/hour. As an experienced investigator, I cannot work indigent investigations because I simply can't afford to. I also see potential new investigators having second thoughts about getting licensed in Oregon due to this low rate.

When there are not enough investigators, attorneys end up doing aspects of investigation work to move their cases forward. Freeing up attorneys to do legal work by building and retaining the investigator pool means attorneys can potentially take more cases. Thus, recruiting and retaining investigators at \$75/hour is a key component to resolving the public defense crisis in Oregon.

Please support the rate change for investigators and please implement this rate change effective July 2025. Further delays with either increasing the rate or implementing the rate change only contributes to a further worsening of the public defense crisis.

Thank you.

Submitter: Thad Higgins  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee  
On Public Safety  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB5031

Hello! I am Thad Higgins, a licensed Private Investigator in Oregon. I have a team of four PI's. We work primarily criminal defense cases mostly in Central Oregon, but we have cases in other parts of the state as well. OPDC cases are around 70 percent of our caseload, with the remaining percentage consisting of retained/private clients.

Firstly, Thank you very much for discussing this and have our wage on your radar! I really appreciate it!

Securing the long awaited increase to \$75/hour will make a significant difference in the quality of the PIs I can attract and retain on my team. At the current rates, two of the four members on my team can only work part time, because they must maintain other employment for the predicability of their income and the rate making sense, related to the types of work we do. Our work can be stressful and dangerous. Increasingly, our case load demands that we find and interview subjects in homeless areas. In Central Oregon these areas are often wooded areas with difficult access. Because of these considerations, our team members need self defense training and tools. And vehicles and tires equal to getting out to the witnesses and back. All of these items and training require extra time and money to obtain. Of course as Private Investigators, our training is not paid for, we don't invoice for that. On the other hand, law enforcement works with the same population, but they are provided with 100's of hours a year of training and they drive government vehicles.

In addition, when my team and are are working nights and weekends, there is no overtime paid. Also, we do not accrue vacation/Flex Time or sick time. A hourly rate increase will make all those issues more palatable.

The pay rate for PIs has lagged significantly behind inflation for decades. The increase to \$75 makes sense based on the 1985 rate of \$25/hour when adjusted for inflation and other considerations. I believe the Federal Rate is at \$90/hour, parody with the Fed rate seems like a good goal...

Another consideration I hope is on your radar is the fact that for most of us, we are running a business based on these pay rates. I pay for an office, office supplies, phone accounts, insurances, vehicle expenses, taxes, marketing, administration costs, database subscriptions (TLO, DMV) and other business expenses. So the hourly rate I collect does not all go into my pocket, I have many places the dollars must go before it puts food on the table and for shoes for little Timmy!

While I try to never say "no" when asked to take on cases, if I have to, I will push a OPDC case if a retained case comes in, and we are too busy. Right now, my retained rate is \$115/hour, so from a business standpoint it would be foolish to make half the money.

I understand that part of the discussion is concerning the timing of the implementation of the wage increase. I would strongly encourage and ask that this be accomplished sooner than later! I am hoping to hang onto my current team, training new people is a drag and takes away from my defense work, and no one is paid for that. I will pass along any increase to my team members, and that should help them want to stay. My team members are consistently being recruited by law offices and law enforcement agencies. both of which offer benefits, paid training, and a consistent paycheck. In addition to the above considerations, with the wage increase, I will be able to offer a pay rate that makes sense to some great prospective PI's who simply can not work for what I can reasonably offer based on the current rates. This will allow us to handle more cases, assisting more attorneys. I sincerely implore you to implement this increase by July of 2025.

In closing, I would like to again thank you for considering our wages and for pursuing the goal of securing solid defense teams for every Oregonian!

If you wish to speak to me, my number is 541-480-7950.

Best Wishes,

Thad Higgins

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**Daniel Kraus, Private Investigator #118217**

PO Box 318  
West Linn, Oregon 97068  
(503) 318-4441  
mazamaconsulting@gmail.com

17th of March, 2025

Dear Members of the Ways and Means Committee:

I am a licensed private investigator in the State of Oregon. I support POP 104 and the attendant increase in investigator pay. I am also asking that the implementation for the rate increase take effect July 2025.

Public defense investigators are paid significantly less than what we were paid in 1985 when adjusted for inflation. In 1985 investigators were paid \$25/hr. The equivalent of that today is \$75/hr. We are asking only to be brought to the same pay rate that we were paid in 1985. Expenses associated with maintaining a private investigations business are also significantly higher than in 1985, including bonding, insurance, and numerous other business expenses that are required.

Currently the state struggles to recruit and retain investigators in public defense due to the low rate. Increasing the rate will keep more investigators in state public defense, and will attract desperately needed new investigators.

Where there are not enough investigators, attorneys must do tasks that would otherwise be done by investigators. More investigators mean that these tasks can be done for less money, and attorneys can take more cases. Recruiting and retaining investigators is a key component to resolving the public defense crisis in Oregon

Delaying the rate increase by six months further delays progress toward resolving the public defense crisis. We are asking for the rate change to be implemented in July of this year.

Sincerely,

*Daniel Kraus*

Submitter: Wayne Gunderson  
On Behalf Of: Self and Oregon Private Investigators  
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee  
On Public Safety  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB5031

## Support for POP 104 and the Increase in Investigator Pay

I am writing to express my support for POP 104 and the proposed increase in investigator pay. However, I respectfully request that the implementation of the rate increase take effect in July 2025.

It is important to note that public defense investigators are currently paid significantly less than what was earned in 1985 when adjusted for inflation. In 1985, investigators were paid \$25 per hour, which is equivalent to \$75 per hour today. We are merely seeking to be brought current to the same pay rate that we were paid in 1985.

Currently, there is a significant struggle to recruit and retain investigators in public defense due to the low rate of pay. Increasing the rate will not only help retain more investigators within state public defense, but it will also attract the desperately needed new investigators. Where there are not enough investigators, attorneys must undertake tasks that would otherwise be done by investigators. More investigators will ensure these tasks can be done for less money, allowing attorneys to take on more cases.

Recruiting and retaining investigators is a crucial component in resolving the public defense crisis in Oregon. Delaying the rate increase by six months further postpones progress toward resolving this crisis. Therefore, we are requesting the rate change be implemented in July of this year.

Thank you for considering this request and for your ongoing support.

Sincerely,

Wayne Gunderson  
Private Investigator, 39740  
Gunderson Services, LLC

Submitter: Jacob Accurso  
On Behalf Of: The taxpayer  
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee  
On Public Safety  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB5031

Greetings from Logsden, where the Siletz River flows above its bottom that is still shallow enough to cause a roar as it slides over large boulders on its way to the sea. From my house along its banks, I am writing so that you might hear the roar that is produced when pointing out that criminal defense investigators should be working at a rate of \$75 per hour.

Others have pointed out the merits of adjusting for inflation, but I want to say a few words about the importance of the Private Investigator in the criminal justice system overall.

Please consider this. My job saves the taxpayer money. We need more criminal investigators and a rate of \$75 per hour will convince more to join our ranks.

I'm hearing that, due to the shortage of licensed investigators, there are attorneys who are having to do the work that an investigator should be doing. Please keep in mind that if an attorney doesn't have an investigator and she or he performs interviews of any kind, that attorney leaves themselves open to becoming an impeachable witness in the case, and cannot therefore legally continue to represent the client. But how does having an investigator save the taxpayer money?

When I go out into the field and marshal the information from the many layers of witnesses that the police didn't have time to interview, I can often go back to the attorney and tell them that, based upon the information I've obtained, it would be in the best interest of the client to accept a reasonable plea offer if one is available. Without the information I gather, consider the cost of going to trial, compounded by the cost to the taxpayer of having to show up for a jury pool and take time off from work, etc. Consider also the cost to the taxpayer to pay me travel time plus mileage to attempt to locate and serve witnesses involved in the case. Consider also the cost to the taxpayer to repeat that process after the trial has been postponed and subpoenas need to be re-issued.

Criminal investigators are worth our weight in gold in terms of often producing information to the client that can enlighten them to the fact that if they choose to go to trial, the testimony brought against them by the office of the District Attorney is very likely going to result in a prison sentence. Consider the cost of the taxpayer when they have to pony up the money to have someone sit in prison for 13 months versus 36 months.



Speaking of the office of the District Attorney, I'm wondering how much an eight hour day at their operating rate costs the taxpayer. And if an eight hour day doesn't have to go towards prosecuting my client, then maybe they can channel their publicly funded monies toward cases that really matter to the taxpayer.

Consider that during the process of my going out to interview those witnesses that the police didn't have time to interview, I uncover exculpatory information precipitating my written report to be delivered to the attorney who in turn shares that information with the office of the District Attorney and this time, the charges are dismissed. I can't tell you how many times I've made this happen. Every single time that happens, there's no trial and therefore no subpoenas and therefore the taxpayer is spared having to pay for that part of the judicial process that could've been avoided altogether had the client had the information that likely would have led to making a more informed decision.

There is a shortage of criminal investigators. I am currently turning down requests from attorneys to take more cases. At the rate of \$75 per hour, more licensed investigators will consider work in the criminal justice system as opposed to holding out for the big bucks in the private sector.

To whom it may concern,

My name is Pete Gassner, and I'm a licensed private investigator in Central Oregon, based in Redmond. I have been a private investigator for almost nine years, and for the last several years, my practice has predominately consisted of criminal defense cases. I primarily work case in Central Oregon, including those in Jefferson County, Deschutes County, and Crook County. However, I often have 2-3 murder cases in other Oregon Counties. Currently, I have additional cases in Wasco County and Klamath County. I am a sole proprietor and independent contractor. The name of my company is Juniper Investigations and Consulting LLC. I have been a regional director, and board member with the Oregon Association of License Investigators (OALI) for over seven years.

As an independent contractor, I'm responsible for all my business expenses, and I do not receive any benefits from the state. That means no health benefits, no paid time off, no retirement, 401K, sick leave, etc. We are reimbursed for mileage at the state rate, but I am responsible for paying for my vehicle and all associated maintenance costs. Additionally, I must pay rent for office space in town, providing me with a proper place to conduct my business and meet with clients. Furthermore, I pay for office supplies, phones, insurances, general administration costs, database subscriptions, etc.

Securing a long-awaited increase to \$75/hour will make a significant difference in My ability to continue working as an investigator and providing quality criminal investigations for public defenders in Central Oregon. The work that criminal defense investigators do is extremely important and we are pivotal piece of the court appointed public defense puzzle. Public defenders cannot adequately represent their clients without private investigators who work cases at the OPDC pre-authorized rate. The public defense crisis in Oregon is well documented and the struggle to recruit, train, and retain quality public defenders is front and center of that crisis. Public defenders need the proper tools, time and support to provide the level of representation to their clients the Oregon constitution demands. If attorneys wore a tool belt, investigators would be the hammer, the nails, tape measure, etc. We conduct the interviews, track down witnesses, serve subpoenas, request and obtain records, provide case research, provide client management, and much, much more.

I have been doing this long enough and have a steady flow of work that I am able to have some semblance of a regular paycheck. However, this took years to accomplish and there are still some months when both the timing and amount of my paycheck(s) are questionable. Getting pre-authorized for a case is just the beginning of the process. Some cases are completed in 1-3 weeks while others drag out for several

months, if not more. We don't submit invoices for a case until the case is closed or we have exhausted the pre-authorized hours for that case. Meaning, once you receive pre-authorization, you may not submit an invoice for that authorization for several months. Yet still, once that invoice is submitted, it will take 5-6 weeks for OPDC to pay that invoice. Imagine trying to begin a career as a private investigator primarily working court appointed criminal defense case. It is difficult at best and nearly impossible if you do not have financial support from a spouse or partner. As such, it is prohibitive in attracting quality criminal defense investigators to our industry. If the rates are increased to \$75/HR, it will provide new investigators with more financial stability to grow their business and establish consistent workflow, and payment.

The pay rate for private investigators has lagged significantly behind inflation for decades. The increase to \$75/HR makes sense based on the 1985 rate of \$25/hour when adjusted for inflation and other considerations. We are asking only to be brought current to the same pay rate that investigators were paid in **1985**.

Additionally, the federal rate for investigators is currently \$90/HR and most of us bill our privately retained cases at a minimum of \$100/HR. As a busy investigator, if I must choose between a retained case or an OPDC case, it's difficult to pass up the case which pays twice as much!

Thank you very much for your time and consideration. Please help us continue providing quality public criminal defense for every eligible Oregonian.

Sincerely,

Pete Gassner.

Good day,

My Name is AL McGee, I am a licensed Private Investigator in Oregon. I work with The Kenzie Group, We work primarily criminal defense cases mostly in Washington County, but we have cases in other parts of the state as well.

OPDC cases are around 95 percent of our caseload, with the remaining percentage consisting of retained/private clients.

Firstly, Thank you very much for discussing this matter, we appreciate it!

Securing the long-awaited increase to \$75/hour will make a significant difference in the quality of the PIs we can attract and retain on our team.

Our work can be stressful and dangerous. Increasingly, our case load demands that we find and interview subjects in homeless areas. In Multnomah County and some areas of Washington County, these areas are often difficult access for security reasons.

Because of these considerations, our team members need additional training and tools. All of these items require extra time and money to obtain.

As you know, Private investigators tools and training if needed are not paid for by OPDC, on the other hand, law enforcement works with the same population, but they are provided with 100's of hours a year of training and they drive government vehicles.

The pay rate for PIs has lagged significantly behind inflation for decades. The increase to \$75 makes sense based on the 1985 rate of \$25/hour when adjusted for inflation and other considerations. I believe the Federal Rate is at \$90/hour.

Another consideration is the fact that for most of us, we are running a business based on these pay rates. We pay for Licenses, an office, office supplies, phone accounts, insurances, vehicle expenses, taxes, marketing, administration costs, database subscriptions (TLO, DMV) and other business expenses. So, the hourly rate we collect does not all go into our pockets.

Regarding the implementation of the asked wage increase, I would encourage that this be accomplished sooner than later.

In addition, with the wage increase, we would be able to offer a pay rate that makes sense to prospective PI's who simply cannot work for what we can reasonably offer based on the current rates.

This will allow us to handle more cases, assisting more attorneys. I sincerely request you implement this increase by July of 2025.

In closing, I would like to again thank you for considering our wages and for pursuing the goal of securing solid defense teams for every Oregonian!

If you wish to speak to me, my number is 971-448-8383.

Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter!

Respectfully,

AL McGee

Hello,

My name is Kara Joseph. I am a licensed Private Investigator based in Northeastern Oregon, specifically the 10th Judicial District. With my PI license, I provide professional services to attorneys from all over Oregon, but my main focus is criminal defense investigation, where I am contracted with OPDC.

Even living in a rural area, there is so much need for investigative work – such that I have to turn down cases at times in order to provide the best service possible to the clients and attorneys I work with.

While I run a healthy business, months can be lean by the time you pay for basic business expenses, licensing with DPSST, taxes, field vehicle repairs and maintenance, health insurance, as well as continuing education costs which are required to keep our licensing up-to-date. Not to mention trying to set a little money aside for retirement. Being a private contractor, there are no paid days off for sickness or vacation, nor are there set paychecks every month as pay from OPDC is based upon case closures. This is not a complaint, but a simple fact of doing business with the state.

As a life-long fiscal conservative, I don't take lightly the request to increase the hourly rate for OPDC Private Investigators. However, without a rate increase, I know I am not the only Private Investigator providing services to OPDC that will need to make a serious decision – to continue working at their \$55 per hour rate, or take on more retained work where I can earn a much higher rate on cases that are commonly less stressful or demanding.

To provide some perspective, I am currently driving an 11-year-old vehicle which I paid off prior to starting my career as a PI. I need to seriously consider purchasing a vehicle with less miles, and one that is more appropriate for the conditions I drive in for some of my cases. But I am concerned about being able to make ends meet with a car payment at the current interest rate and the inflation of literally everything else.

I don't say this to complain – that is not my intent at all. But I do hope it provides just one example of the choices Private Investigators dedicating their time to OPDC are faced with.

A rate increase to \$75 per hour for OPDC cases would alleviate some of the stressors we are faced with in this profession. It can be a dangerous, unpredictable, and sometimes thankless job. I am passionate about my work as a criminal defense investigator, and would love to continue providing professional and compassionate services to defendants across the state.

I know there is also concern about when a potential rate increase could take place. I am afraid that if this rate increase doesn't take place in July of 2025 with the new fiscal year, OPDC will lose some very talented Private Investigators which will only increase the workload of those PIs who remain. This will add additional strain on an already fragile system.

I sincerely appreciate you taking the time to consider the testimonies you have heard and read from Private Investigators like myself.

Sincerely,

Kara Joseph

Attn: Oregon Legislators

Hello from Eastern Oregon!

My name is Scott Clark and I am a Oregon State Licensed Private Investigator working in Public Defense in Eastern Oregon. I work full time for a public defense firm, and full time does not mean 40 hours per week. We have a large case load and the volume and type of work that we perform leads us to work on projects 7 days a week. I drive my own vehicle, I use my own cell phone, I go wherever I must go and whenever I need to go...24/7.

Our work is tough but rewarding. When one of us wins a case, the entire team cheers. The judges of our county very much appreciate the work that we do (although maybe the DA does not).

In my opinion, good defense is based on good investigation. We struggle to recruit, and we struggle to retain. Our pay is low, too low for what we do, but we do appreciate an increase in wages and would certainly like that increase to begin as soon as possible. I am not sure if this is realized, but the more work an investigator does on a case, the less work the attorney has to do on that same case. Our work saves money and time in the system, and I believe it is the best cost savings that can be tapped into inside of the public defense system. Please help us to do our work (for a reasonable and fair rate of pay) so that the attorneys can do the "attorney work" at their higher rate more effectively and efficiently. This is a key component to resolving the public defense crisis in Oregon.

As a public defense investigator, I would request that the pay rate increase be started in July of this year. The more funding that goes to investigation, the less pressure is on the attorneys of which we do not have enough. This increase is not throwing good money for bad, this increase is to support the entire public defense system at the core of the process...investigation. The added resource in investigation will decrease case processing time and allow for better retention of the great public defense employees that serve our clients in need all over the state of Oregon.

A fact to point out here is that, with more and better investigation, attorneys can take on more cases. I would think that this would make sense and be a core goal for all of us.

Thank you for your time and consideration, and you can contact me below with any questions or comments.

**Scott Clark #114369**

**PH: 541-620-3668**

**EM: [scott.clark@epdlaw.org](mailto:scott.clark@epdlaw.org)**

Submitter: Jacki Higgins  
On Behalf Of: WCN Investigations  
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee  
On Public Safety  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB5031

Good morning! I am Jacki Higgins, a licensed private investigator in Oregon. I work primarily criminal defense cases with a large majority of them from OPDC. I am so appreciative of all of your hard work over there. I imagine it has been a couple of trying years addressing the public defense crisis in Oregon.

I've read through the other testimonies that have been submitted so far and I concur with all of their points. I just want to add that having the increase sooner (July) rather than later (January) would be important to my business and everybody else that work tirelessly on public defense cases.

To delay the rate increase by 6 months further delays our ability to attract new PI's to the industry or to convince seasoned PI's to join the ranks and help out in the public defense sector. We would love to be a part of the solution to resolve the public defense crisis in Oregon.

Help us help the attorneys, taking work off of their plate by bringing our rate closer to the Fed rate and drawing the help of other good PI's that should be compensated for their valuable work.

Again, I respectfully submit this testimony and I really appreciate all that you are doing to help public safety and public defense in the great state of Oregon.

Sincerely,

Jacki Higgins



Submitter: Thomas Hanrahan  
On Behalf Of: Private Investigators on OPDC cases  
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee  
On Public Safety  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB5031

The current inadequate rate of pay for private investigators significantly exacerbates the current, and chronic, public defense crisis in Oregon. Experienced and motivated investigators are the most crucial part of a criminal defense team. Investigators commonly asked to complete the most difficult tasks/duties in support of a criminal defendant. This includes seeking witnesses, or evidence, in unsafe places and contacting potentially unsafe individuals. Attorneys rely on experienced investigators to exercise their discretion as they work on the case. And, experienced investigators are essential to developing a positive and trusting relationship with clients.

The difficult work conditions and the low pay discourages qualified and dedicated investigators from working on OPDC cases over the long term. As with the churning of public defenders the churning of investigators impact effective criminal defense everyday. While adequate pay is but one tool it is an essential tool needed to insure that a defendant will receive an adequate investigator which impacts the extent to which a defendant will receive an adequate defense.

The increase sought, \$20 p/hr, is a modest proposal in light of the benefit it provides. As you, the legislature, struggle to find a solution to the public defense crisis you can this small step is an excellent first step.

thanks for your time.

T Hanrahan

Submitter: Suzanne Swift

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee  
On Public Safety

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB5031

I strongly support Policy Option Package (POP) 104 in the Governor's Recommended Budget for the Office of Public Defense Counsel, which includes an increase in investigator pay to \$75 per hour as detailed on page 97 of the accompanying presentation.

In 1985, public defense investigators were paid \$25 per hour. When adjusted for inflation, that rate is equivalent to \$75 per hour today. This pay increase is not an arbitrary figure—it represents simply a restoration to the level of compensation our investigators were historically afforded. For decades, our public defense workforce has been paid significantly less than their inflation-adjusted counterparts, creating a persistent economic disparity that must be remedied.

The current pay scale has led to major challenges in recruiting and retaining qualified investigators. Low wages force our agencies to compete in a tight labor market, often resulting in understaffed investigative teams. In many instances, the shortage of dedicated investigators forces attorneys to shoulder investigative responsibilities—tasks that detract from their ability to represent clients effectively and ultimately compromise the quality of public defense services.

Implementing the pay increase will not only help retain experienced investigators but will also attract new talent to a field that is critical to the fair administration of justice. More investigators mean that tasks can be completed by professionals whose focus is solely on gathering and analyzing evidence, enabling attorneys to devote more time to legal strategy and client advocacy. This shift is essential for reducing caseload burdens and improving the overall efficiency of our public defense.

While we appreciate that POP 104 includes this much-needed pay increase, the technical delay that pushes the effective date from July 2025 to January 2026 further postpones progress in resolving Oregon's public defense crisis. Every month without a rate adjustment means continued hardship for investigators and ongoing challenges in meeting the public's legal needs. To remedy these issues swiftly and align our pay structure with both historical standards and modern economic realities, we respectfully urge that the effective date be moved to July 2025.

A timely increase in investigator pay is a critical step toward ensuring that Oregon's public defense system is adequately staffed and fully capable of serving our community. By restoring pay to the inflation-adjusted level of \$75 per hour as established in 1985, we are not asking for a windfall but simply for fairness and the

ability to attract and retain skilled professionals.

Thank you for your time and your commitment to strengthening public defense in our state. I respectfully request that you support implementing the rate increase in July 2025.

Steven Wilson  
Portland Investigators  
DPSST #33888

March 19, 2025

RE: HB 5031, POP 104

Senator Broadman, Representative Evans, and the Public Safety Subcommittee.:

Defense investigators provide an essential function in public defense. Investigators locate and interview witnesses, find records and evidence. They are essential to case strategy and can help settle cases and avoid trial.

Right now, due to inflationary pressure and competing wages, there are not enough public defense investigators. This gap in the workforce results in attorneys having to do investigative tasks – work they are not trained to do. Because lawyers are paid considerably more than investigators, this is also an inefficient use of taxpayer money. More investigators effectively reduces attorney caseloads and it does so for less money than hiring more attorneys.

I believe that the deficit in the investigator workforce can be addressed. A stable, reasonable hourly wage – one that is competitive, even if not equal to hourly rates we receive from other sources – will bring investigators back to state public defense work, encourage new investigators into the profession, and allow lawyers to do the work they were trained to do.

Please take a step towards resolving our public defense crisis by stabilizing the investigator workforce. Please vote yes on Measure HB 5031, POP 104.

Thank you,

Steven Wilson  
PI lic #33888

LAURIE BENDER, P.C.  
ATTORNEY AT LAW  
P.O. Box 82189  
PORTLAND, OREGON 97282  
(503) 241-7075

March 19, 2025

Co-Chairs Broadman and Evans, members of the committee,

I am a public defense attorney in Oregon with 35 years of experience. Over the course of my career, I have worked as a staff attorney for a non-profit public defender organization, co-owned and managed a small law firm, participated in a consortium, and served as a solo practitioner representing court-appointed clients in both state and federal courts.

I am writing to ask you to support the increase in the rate paid to public defense investigators included in POP 104 of the OPDC proposed budget, and to support rapid implementation of the rate change, making it effective in July of 2025.

As you know, Oregon's criminal justice system is compromised by the ongoing public defense crisis. According to OPDC's recent presentations to the Legislature, there are approximately 4,000 unrepresented individuals in the state, and there is a concern that the problem will continue to persist without serious efforts to address the current public defense delivery model. While the Legislature has recognized the need to increase the number of available attorneys, there is a critical need to give more attention to a hidden workforce deficit in public defense: legal investigators. The investigator workforce is dwindling because of inadequate pay. A lack of available legal investigators exacerbates the existing attorney deficit, contributing to higher costs and less desirable case outcomes.

Recruiting and retaining skilled investigators is crucial to addressing the public defense crisis. In my current practice, the need for experienced investigators has never been greater. Effective public defense requires investigators with knowledge and/or expertise in a broad range of areas, including record collection and management, FOIA and public records requests, mobile phone data extraction, computer forensics, social media analysis, and multi-jurisdictional and cross-agency investigations and prosecutions. Additionally, investigators must be adept at interviewing witnesses, locating and verifying evidence, analyzing surveillance footage, and working collaboratively with defense teams to uncover mitigating factors and wrongful prosecutions. Strengthening the investigative resources available to public defenders is essential to ensuring fair and thorough representation for every client.

I strongly urge legislators to support POP 104 and raise the investigator hourly rate to \$75 effective July 2025.

Sincerely,



Laurie Bender  
Attorney at Law  
/LB

March 19, 2025

Public Safety Subcommittee of Ways and Means  
RE: In Support of a Stable Investigator Work Force

Dear Co-Chairs Broadman and Evans, Members of the Committee:

I am a public defense attorney working in Oregon. I am writing to ask you to support the increase in the rate paid to public defense investigators included in Policy Option Package 104 of the OPDC proposed budget, and to support rapid implementation of the rate change, making it effective in July of 2025.

As you know, Oregon's criminal justice system is compromised by the ongoing public defense crisis. The crisis involves the large numbers of unrepresented, indigent individuals, in our criminal justice system. I work with skilled, hard working, and competent investigators. These individuals are undervalued and underpaid. The current number of qualified investigators is a very small pool. The ability to *recruit and retain skilled investigators is vital* to solving the public defense crisis.

I strongly urge legislators to support HB 5031 - Policy Option Package 104 and raise the investigator hourly rate to \$75 effective July 2025. Thank you for your consideration.

Very Truly,

*Dianna J. Gentry*

Dianna J. Gentry  
Attorney at Law

# BOISE | MATTHEWS<sup>LLP</sup>

ATTORNEYS AT LAW

121 S.W. Morrison, Suite 700  
Portland, OR 97204  
(503) 228-0487 (Phone)  
(877) 357-8282 (Toll Free)  
(503) 227-5984 (Fax)

WHITNEY P. BOISE  
whitney@boisematthews.com

KENDRA M. MATTHEWS  
kendra@boisematthews.com

March 19, 2025

Joint Subcommittee on Public Safety  
Oregon State Legislature  
Via Written Testimony Submission Form

Re: In Support of a Stable Investigator Work Force  
HB 5031

Co-Chairs Broadman and Evans, members of the committee,

We write as criminal defense attorneys working in Oregon. We often have investigators who are paid through the Oregon Public Defense Commission. We write to urge you to not only support the increase in the rate paid to public defense investigators included in POP 104 of the OPDC proposed budget, but to support the implementation of that rate change effective July 2025. (As opposed to January 2026.)

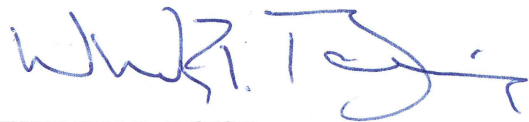
As you know, Oregon's criminal justice system is compromised by the ongoing public defense crisis. As late as February 2025, around 4,000 charged individuals still do not have counsel. Obviously, securing counsel is a priority, but the focus on counsel has often overlooked a hidden workforce deficit in public defense: legal investigators. The investigator workforce is dwindling because of inadequate pay. A lack of available legal investigators exacerbates the existing attorney deficit, contributing to higher costs and less desirable case outcomes. The ability to recruit and retain skilled investigators is vital to solving the public defense crisis.

We strongly urge legislators to support POP 104 and raise the investigator hourly rate to \$75 effective July 2025.

Sincerely,



KENDRA M. MATTHEWS



WHITNEY P. BOISE

**Amanda L. Campbell**  
164 White Oak Lane  
Roseburg, Oregon 97471  
Amanda.campbell@uvpd.org  
(541) 802-6538

March 19, 2025

**Subject: Written Testimony in support of POP 104 – Strengthening Public Defense Through Investigator Support**

To Whom this May Concern,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony regarding POP 104 and its implications for Oregon's public defense system. As an investigator for a public defender's office, I have an interest in ensuring that Oregon fulfills its constitutional duty to provide effective legal representation to all, particularly those reliant on public defense. While POP 104 addresses the unrepresented defendant crisis, I urge the Commission to expand its focus to include the critical role of public defense investigators, whose compensation and workforce stability are essential to a functioning system.

POP 104, enacted under Section 104 of Chapter 281, Oregon Laws 2023, mandates coordinated crisis plans to address the backlog of unrepresented defendants, a crisis underscored by over 2,500 individuals without counsel, including more than 100 in custody, as reported in early 2024. While this is a vital step, the temporary nature of POP 104, expiring on June 30, 2025, necessitates permanent reforms. One such reform must prioritize the support of public defense investigators, who are indispensable to building strong cases and ensuring fair trials.

I propose that the Commission advocate for raising public defense investigators' pay to \$75 per hour by July 2025. This rate aligns with what investigators were effectively paid in 1985, adjusted for inflation, a fair benchmark that reflects the economic realities of today. In 1985, investigators earned approximately \$20 per hour, which, when adjusted using the Consumer Price Index, equates to roughly \$75 in 2025 dollars. This adjustment is not a luxury but a necessity. The current under compensation of investigators undermines their ability to sustain a career in public defense, contributing to high turnover and staffing shortages. Implementing this pay increase by July 2025, shortly after POP 104's expiration, would signal a proactive commitment to stabilizing the system and prevent further erosion of investigative capacity as caseloads grow.

Beyond pay, the Commission must address the recruitment and retention of public defense investigators. The shortage of attorneys, as noted in Moss Adams and ABA reports, is mirrored by a similar scarcity of qualified investigators. These professionals uncover evidence, interview witnesses, and support defense strategies, tasks attorneys would otherwise be forced to perform alone without investigators. Yet, low pay and lack of career incentives drive talent away. I urge the



Commission to collaborate with lawmakers to secure funding for this \$75-per-hour rate within a broader \$1.3 billion-plus budget for 2029-2031, while also establishing recruitment initiatives like training stipends, student loan forgiveness, or mentorship programs. Retention efforts, such as clear career ladders and professional development, would further ensure a robust investigator workforce.

Additionally, I encourage the Commission to enhance transparency in implementing POP 104. Crisis teams in judicial districts with populations over 100,000 should include voices from investigators, defendants, and community members. Public forums or regular updates could ensure these plans address systemic gaps, including investigator support, with accountability to Oregonians.

In conclusion, POP 104 is a critical starting point, but its success hinges on a fully resourced public defense system. Raising investigators' pay to \$75 per hour by July 2025, equivalent to 1985's inflation-adjusted rate, and prioritizing their recruitment and retention are urgent steps to uphold Sixth Amendment rights. I respectfully request that the Commission champion these measures and remain available to discuss this further.

Thank you for your dedication and service.

Respectfully,



Amanda L. Campbell  
Investigator & Case Manager

Submitter: Inessa Worthington  
On Behalf Of: OALI  
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee  
On Public Safety  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB5031

- We support POP 104 and the increase in investigator pay, but ask that the implementation for the rate increase take effect July 2025.
- Public defense investigators are paid significantly less than what we were paid in 1985 when adjusted for inflation.
- In 1985 investigators were paid \$25/hr. The equivalent of that today is \$75/hr. We are asking only to be brought current to the same pay rate that we were paid in 1985.
- Currently we struggle to recruit and retain investigators in public defense due to the low rate. Increasing the rate will keep more investigators in state public defense, and will attract desperately needed new investigators.
- Where there are not enough investigators, attorneys must do tasks that would otherwise be done by investigators. More investigators mean that these tasks can be done for less money, and attorneys can take more cases.
- Recruiting and retaining investigators is a key component to resolving the public defense crisis in Oregon
- Delaying the rate increase by six months further delays progress toward resolving the public defense crisis. We are asking for the rate change to be implemented in July of this year.

Laura Rittall Investigations Inc.  
P.O. Box 398  
Toledo, OR 97391  
503-473-2954

**LAURA RITTALL  
INVESTIGATIONS  
INC.**

Date: March 19<sup>th</sup>, 2025

Attn. Co-Chairs, Senator Broadman and Representative Evans of the Public Safety Committee and members.

Re: POP 104 implementation

Greetings,

I am a mitigation investigator in Oregon and Washington. I am writing in support for the POP 104 package that includes an increase in investigator pay in Oregon, which is long overdue. I would ask that the rate increase become effective as soon as possible, or by July, of 2025.

The rate that investigators are currently paid, minus overhead, is about the same as someone who works in a convenience store. It does not reflect the value that investigators provide to the community in public defense.

It should not be such a difficult ask, when states around us are paying so much more. Many investigators, including myself, have been lured to work elsewhere because of it, and because they pay in a timely manner. Newer investigators are discouraged and don't stay.

The fewer investigators there are, the more it burdens the lawyers. No case should lack quality investigation, but we see it happening. The more delay in fixing this issue, the more the public defense crisis deepens.

We can already see that this issue is creating a contentious environment of blaming, and outrageous and non-credible attacks are being launched the people doing the work. This has to stop. One way, is to support the work instead of continuing to undermine it. Please make the increased rate effective no later than July, 2025.

Thank you,  
Laura Rittall

Submitter: Lisa Parker  
On Behalf Of: Private Investigator  
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee  
On Public Safety  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB5031

I am currently a private investigator operating in Crook County. It has become increasingly evident that the compensation for private investigators has not kept pace with inflation. Therefore, I believe it is both reasonable and necessary to increase the hourly rate from \$55 to \$75.

Private investigators typically do not receive paid sick leave, vacation days, or other benefits that are standard in many professions. This proposed rate increase would help cover these essential costs, as well as the operational expenses associated with running a private business.

I am uncertain as to why the previously requested implementation date of July 2025 can not be met. I strongly encourage addressing any barriers that may be preventing this adjustment, as it is crucial for maintaining the viability of our profession.

Moreover, there is a significant shortage of private investigators in our region. Establishing a competitive pay rate is essential to attract and retain qualified professionals, ultimately enhancing the availability of critical investigative services throughout the state of Oregon. Thank you for considering this important matter.

Lisa Parker  
OR-PI 125419

Submitter: Sean Coyne

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee  
On Public Safety

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB5031

Sean Coyne  
Crux Private Eye LLC  
PO Box 86082  
Portland, OR 97286  
sean@cruxprivateeye.com  
347-415-3983

March 19, 2025

Oregon State Legislature  
Joint Subcommittee on Public Safety  
900 Court St NE  
Salem, OR 97301

Subject: Urging Support for Policy Option Package 104 – Investigator Pay Increase to \$75/hr

Dear Members of the House Committee on Judiciary,

I am writing to express my strong support for Policy Option Package (POP) 104, which includes an increase in public defense investigator pay to \$75 per hour. As a licensed private investigator in Oregon with years of experience working on complex criminal defense cases, I have seen firsthand how vital our role is in ensuring access to justice. I urge you to pass this provision and to implement the increase by July 2025, rather than delaying it until January 2026.

The current investigator pay rate—unchanged for decades—fails to reflect the importance of our work or the cost of living in Oregon. In 1985, investigators were paid \$25 per hour, the equivalent of \$75 per hour in today's dollars when adjusted for inflation. We are not asking for a raise beyond what we were already earning nearly 40 years ago—we are simply asking to be brought current.

At the current rate, public defense investigators struggle to remain in this field, and recruiting new investigators is nearly impossible. Without sufficient investigators, attorneys are forced to take on investigative tasks themselves, which is neither cost-effective nor an efficient use of legal resources. The lack of available investigators directly contributes to delays in the justice system, increased case backlogs, and

inadequate defense for indigent clients.

Raising the investigator rate to \$75 per hour would help Oregon retain experienced investigators, attract new professionals, and ensure that attorneys can focus on legal work while investigators handle essential case research and fact-finding.

Implementing this increase in July 2025, rather than delaying it another six months, would be a critical step toward resolving the public defense crisis that Oregon is currently facing.

This investment is not just about fair compensation—it is about efficiency, effectiveness, and upholding the integrity of Oregon's legal system. I urge you to support Policy Option Package 104 and implement the rate increase by July 2025.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Sean Coyne  
Crux Private Eye LLC  
DPSST #79027

PADILLA INVESTIGATIONS LLC  
Michael J. Padilla, Bilingual Defense Investigator  
Oregon License: PI-ID 33675  
Email: [pipadilla@protonmail.com](mailto:pipadilla@protonmail.com)  
5055 Waymire Rd, Dallas, OR 97338  
PH: 541-881-9572

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March 19, 2025

TO: Joint Subcommittee on Public Safety RE: POP 104

I am a bilingual defense investigator, and I support POP 104 and the increase in defense investigator pay. I respectfully request you consider making the effective date July 2025 for the \$75.00 / hr pay increase.

I have been a small business owner in Oregon as a defense investigator since the beginning of Oregon Public Defense Services, which is now Oregon Public Defense Commission. I appreciate very much that you are acknowledging our need for this increase in pay for defense investigators considering the costs in running our small businesses and increase in cost of living in general.

It would truly benefit defense investigators for you to implement the \$75.00 / hr pay effective July 2025, and for Oregon Public Defense Commission to be competitive with Federal rate of pay, and with other States' defense investigator's rate of pay.

Best regards,

  
Michael J. Padilla  
Bilingual Defense Investigator

March 19, 2025

In Support of a Stable Investigator Work Force

Co-Chairs Broadman and Evans, members of the committee,

I am a public defense attorney working in Oregon.

I am writing to ask you to support the increase in the rate paid to public defense investigators included in POP 104 of the OPDC proposed budget, and to support rapid implementation of the rate change, making it effective in July of 2025.

As you know, Oregon's criminal justice system is compromised by the ongoing public defense crisis. As of February 20th there are [approximately 4,000](#) unrepresented individuals in the state.

The state's response to this dilemma has focused on increasing the number of available attorneys. While more attorneys are needed, this response has overlooked a hidden workforce deficit in public defense: legal investigators. The investigator workforce is dwindling because of inadequate pay. A lack of available legal investigators exacerbates the existing attorney deficit, contributing to higher costs and less desirable case outcomes.

The ability to recruit and retain skilled investigators is vital to solving the public defense crisis.

I strongly urge legislators to support POP 104 and raise the investigator hourly rate to \$75 effective July 2025.

Sincerely,

**Lisa J. Ludwig**  
**Attorney At Law, OSB 953387**



MURREY INVESTIGATIONS LLC

Lynn Murrey, Defense Investigator  
Phone: (503) 509-4725

Oregon DPSST License: PI-ID 55051  
Email: [pimurrey@pm.me](mailto:pimurrey@pm.me)

March 19, 2025

TO: Joint Subcommittee on Public Safety RE: POP 104

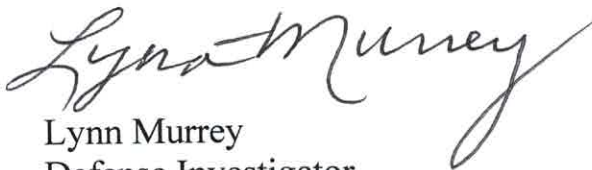
I support POP 104 and the increase in investigator hourly rate and respectfully ask for one adjustment: for the hourly rate increase to \$75.00 /hr be implemented to take effect July 2025.

Delaying the rate increase until 2026 may further affect progress toward resolving the public defense crisis and potentially losing more public defense investigators to the private sector or other States that pay a more equitable wage for public defense investigators. An increase in July 2025 may help with recruiting and retaining qualified defense investigators to help alleviate the crisis Oregon faces currently for public defense investigators.

Please do not delay implementing this increase in making the hourly rate the same across the board for all public defense investigators by implementing the \$75.00 / hour rate in July 2025.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,



Lynn Murrey  
Defense Investigator  
Dallas, OR 97338

The investigator workforce is dwindling because of inadequate pay. A lack of available legal investigators exacerbates the existing attorney deficit, contributing to higher costs and less desirable case outcomes. Recruiting and retaining investigators is a cost-effective strategy for mitigating Oregon's public defense crisis.

# A Stable Investigator Workforce Means Fewer Unrepresented People.



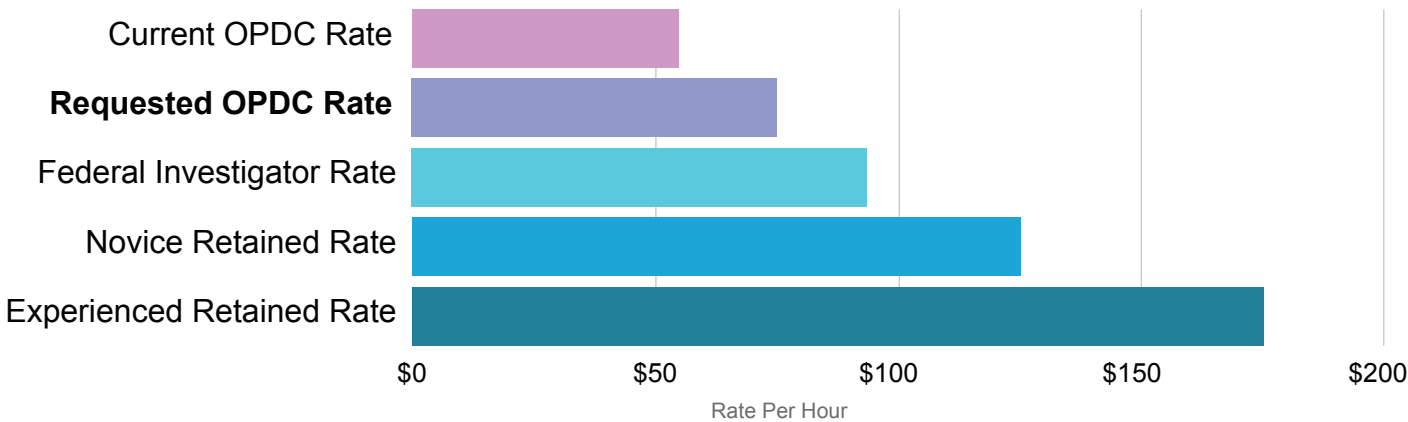
Support POP 104 with an Investigator rate change effective July 2025

Investigators can:

- ✓ find facts
- ✓ manage clients
- ✓ help avoid trial
- ✓ interview witnesses
- ✓ strategize
- ✓ help settle cases
- ✓ allow attorneys to take more cases

It's cheaper to pay investigators to do their jobs than to pay lawyers to do investigation work

Oregon Public Defense Investigators are asking to be paid \$75/hr — the equivalent to what the state paid in 1985 — in order to retain experienced investigators and to recruit desperately needed new investigators to offset the current investigator shortfall and to help eliminate the Unrepresented Crisis in Oregon.



INTERNATIONAL INVESTIGATIONS

37171 Hwy 226 ~ Lebanon, Oregon 97355 ~ USA

Phone (541) 928-791-8901 ~ Fax (541) 928-7884 ~ Cell (541) 981-8817 ~ Email

[rick@iiss.biz](mailto:rick@iiss.biz)

DPSST #10561

Dear OPDC,

My name is Frank "Rick" Mangrum DPSST #10561. I have been a Private Investigator licensed by the State of Oregon since April of 1999.

I am writing to you today to request that you increase the hourly rate of pay for private Investigators conducting Criminal defense investigations from the current rate of \$55.00 per hour to \$75.00 per hour.

I do love my job!

However, as a self-employed contractor for the State of Oregon I simply can not pay the overhead required to operate my business at \$55.00.

Thanks

Frank "Rick" Mangrum

Senior Investigator

International Investigations

DPSST #10561

[Rick@iiss.biz](mailto:Rick@iiss.biz)

Cell (541)981-8817

Submitter: Alex Spinks

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee  
On Public Safety

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB5031

Co-Chairs Broadman and Evans, members of the committee,

I am a public defense attorney working in Oregon.

I am writing to ask you to support the increase in the rate paid to public defense investigators included in POP 104 of the OPDC proposed budget, and to support rapid implementation of the rate change, making it effective in July of 2025.

As you know, Oregon's criminal justice system is compromised by the ongoing public defense crisis. As of February 20th there are approximately 4,000 unrepresented individuals in the state.

The state's response to this dilemma has focused on increasing the number of available attorneys. While more attorneys are needed, this response has overlooked a hidden workforce deficit in public defense: legal investigators. The investigator workforce is dwindling because of inadequate pay. A lack of available legal investigators exacerbates the existing attorney deficit, contributing to higher costs and less desirable case outcomes.

The ability to recruit and retain skilled investigators is vital to solving the public defense crisis.

I strongly urge legislators to support POP 104 and raise the investigator hourly rate to \$75 effective July 2025.



Ryan Sebens, Private Investigator  
Oregon License #101589  
[www.sebensenterprises.com](http://www.sebensenterprises.com)  
[ryan@seinvestigate.com](mailto:ryan@seinvestigate.com)  
971-600-0304

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March 19, 2025

To Whom it May Concern,

My name is Ryan Sebens, and I am a Private Investigator, OR Lic# 101589.

I am writing in support of increasing the private investigator rate to \$75/hour. I am also in support of the rate increase taking place in July.

I own a small business with only one other part time investigator. My business expenses come out of my hourly rate. I am not paid any sick leave or vacation time, and I work long hours to maintain my business.

The majority of my work is from OPDC. Because of a high caseload, I cannot accept work from any more attorneys. I have been forced to refuse new clients several times in the last year.

An increase in the rate would make my business more sustainable. It would also lessen my caseload and help me maintain the quality of my work. The sooner this increase takes place the better.

I love my job as an investigator and hope to continue for many years. Thank you for your consideration.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Ryan Sebens  
Private Investigator #101589

Submitter: Tara Herivel

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee  
On Public Safety

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB5031

Tara Herivel  
Attorney

March 19, 2025

In Support of a Stable Investigator Work Force

Co-Chairs Broadman and Evans, members of the committee,

I am a public defense attorney working in Oregon.

I am writing to ask you to support the increase in the rate paid to public defense investigators included in POP 104 of the OPDC proposed budget, and to support rapid implementation of the rate change, making it effective in July of 2025.

As you know, Oregon's criminal justice system is compromised by the ongoing public defense crisis. As of February 20th there are approximately 4,000 unrepresented individuals in the state.

The state's response to this dilemma has focused on increasing the number of available attorneys. While more attorneys are needed, this response has overlooked a hidden workforce deficit in public defense: legal investigators. The investigator workforce is dwindling because of inadequate pay. A lack of available legal investigators exacerbates the existing attorney deficit, contributing to higher costs and less desirable case outcomes.

The ability to recruit and retain skilled investigators is vital to solving the public defense crisis.

I strongly urge legislators to support POP 104 and raise the investigator hourly rate to \$75 effective July 2025.

Sincerely,

Tara Herivel



Support HB 5031 – POP 104 - Investigator Pay

Co-Chair Broadman, Co-Chair Evans, and members of the Joint Subcommittee on Public Safety,

We are members of the Multnomah County Democrats' Criminal Justice Study Group and we support HB 5031, specifically the Policy Option Package 104 and the increase in investigator pay. We would urge this Committee to implement this rate change to \$75/hour for investigators as effective July 2025.

A big part of Oregon's indigent defense crisis is the lack of experienced investigators willing to work on court-appointed cases. There are two reasons for this:

- 1) the historically low rate of pay, and
- 2) the 5-6 weeks it takes Oregon Public Defense Commission to pay investigators after they have submitted their invoices for completed work.

In 1985 investigators were paid \$25/hour. The equivalent of that rate today is \$75/hour. The current rate is \$55/hour.

Investigators don't submit invoices for a case until the case is closed or they have exhausted the pre-authorized hours for that case. Meaning, once you receive pre-authorization, you may not submit an invoice for that authorization for several months. Yet still, once that invoice is submitted, it will take 5-6 weeks for OPDC to pay that invoice. Imagine trying to run a small business as a private investigator with an almost 2-month lag between a submitted invoice and payment on that invoice.

Investigators play a critical role in criminal cases: reviewing discovery, locating and interviewing witnesses and potential evidence, and assisting attorneys during trial. This is especially critical and necessary work on the more serious felony cases, such as Ballot Measure 11 offenses and murder cases. An experienced and well-trained investigator can locate a key witness or piece of evidence that not only ensures there is a constitutionally adequate defense for the accused, it also helps ensure a just outcome.

Thus, recruiting and retaining investigators at \$75/hour is a key component to resolving the public defense crisis in Oregon. Please support the rate change for investigators and please implement this rate change effective July 2025. Further delays only contributes to a worsening of the public defense crisis.

Rachel Philips  
Sally Joughin  
Deanna Cintas  
Tony Fischer  
Nader Absood  
Laura Locker  
Layla Assem





### **Introduction**

Hello, My name is Troy Hartwell. I am the principal Investigator at Hart 2 Hart Investigations. I have served my community and nation as a Border Patrol Agent, A Police Officer and now as a Criminal Defense Investigator. I also serve on the Board of Directors of OALI (Oregon Association of Licensed Investigators) as the Northwest Region 2 Director.

I currently lead a team of licensed Private Investigators, and we work cases all over the state of Oregon. We have been operating since 2017, we work all criminal cases; everything from minor misdemeanors, class C and B felonies, ballot measure 11 crimes and more serious crimes such as Murder and J-Law cases.

We provide service and expertise that is not only crucial to maintaining a balance in the justice system but is also necessary for a Criminal Defense Attorney to effectively represent and provide a rigorous defense for their clients.

### **Background, challenges**

We have seen numerous changes within this industry landscape. We have witnessed an explosion in the amount of digital discovery that is associated with a criminal case, gone are the days of a 5-page police report and maybe one or two recorded phone calls. We now process and analyze hundreds of gigabytes of information if not more in any given case, especially with grand jury testimony and BWC (Body Worn Camera footage).

Technical expertise, interviewing skills, report writing, discovery management, organizational ability are just some of a long list of needed skills for a decent criminal defense Investigator to possess.

### **My agency struggles to stay competitive with wages/contractor pay.**

Hart 2 Hart Investigations rarely finds an already licensed Private Investigator, we have built a business model of offering training and mentorship to those individuals who are not licensed but have a personal desire to be Criminal Defense Investigators.

We offer a training program which includes a 48-hour basic training course held on Saturdays for 6 weeks, after which the successful students are offered a contractor position as a Defense Investigator with our Agency.

This basic training is just the beginning as being a Criminal Defense Investigator is a challenge in this ever-changing environment. Continuing education is not just a requirement but a need to stay relevant and serve our community properly.

With OPDC current rate for investigators at \$55 an hour, it makes it extremely difficult to attract, train, equip and retain good, qualified people who are motivated to provide exceptional service.

As far as timing, obviously the sooner this could be implemented the sooner, Investigators like me throughout the state can more effectively assist in the unrepresented crisis.

### **Closing**

With an increase to \$75 an hour, we can attract more qualified people, offer more comprehensive training and keep technologically viable. My agency would pass this increase on to our contractors and everyone would benefit, especially the defendants.

Submitter: Tony Chiotti

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee  
On Public Safety

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB5031

- I'm writing to voice my support POP 104 within HB5031 and the increase in investigator pay, but ask that the implementation for the rate increase take effect July 2025.

- Public defense investigators are paid significantly less than what we were paid in 1985 when adjusted for inflation. The costs incurred by an investigator have only grown, including the need to pay out of that rate for our continued legal education, software and database subscriptions, and our individual health insurance.

- In 1985 investigators were paid \$25/hr. The equivalent of that today is \$75/hr. We are asking only to be brought current to the same pay rate that we were paid in 1985.

- Currently we struggle to recruit and retain investigators in public defense due to the low rate. Increasing the rate will keep more investigators in state public defense, and will attract desperately needed new investigators.

- Where there are not enough investigators, attorneys must do tasks that would otherwise be done by investigators (such as reviewing voluminous discovery with clients, poring over phone records and warrant returns, etc.). In short, we are a FORCE MULTIPLIER. More investigators mean that these tasks can be done for less money, and attorneys can put their time toward take more additional cases.

- Recruiting and retaining qualified and motivated investigators is a key component to resolving the public defense crisis in Oregon. POP 104 directly supports this part of the solution.

Thank you for you time.

Tony Chiotti

The Casemakers LLC

DPSST# 115332

# The Law Office of Sohaye Lee

621 SW Morrison Street, Suite 1050  
Portland, OR 97205

T: 503.222.9830  
F: 503.274.8575  
E: [slee@pdxlaw.com](mailto:slee@pdxlaw.com)

March 19, 2025

Re: Support for an accelerated rate increase for investigators

Dear Co-Chair Broadman, Co-chair Evans, and members of the committee:

I am a criminal defense attorney working in Oregon. Although I am in private practice, I accept court-appointed cases when I can. However, one of the major barriers to my accepting more court-appointed cases is that it is extremely difficult to find skilled investigators willing to work at the state rate.

I am writing to ask you to support the increase in the rate paid to public defense investigators included in POP 104 of the OPDC proposed budget, and to support accelerated implementation of the rate change, making it effective in July of 2025.

Oregon's criminal justice system is imperiled by the ongoing public defense crisis. As of February 20th there were [approximately 4,000](#) unrepresented individuals in the state. The state's response to this crisis has been to focus on increasing the number of available attorneys. While more attorneys are needed, this response has overlooked the legal investigators who make up a critical component of public defense. The number of skilled investigators willing to accept court-appointed cases is scarce because of inadequate pay. Therefore, even if the number of available attorneys were to increase, the inability to recruit and retain qualified investigators would continue to hamstring Oregon's public defense system and lead to unjust outcomes.

I strongly urge legislators to support POP 104 and to accelerate the raise to the investigator hourly rate to \$75 effective July of 2025.

Sincerely,



Sohaye Lee

Submitter: Kenneth Fandrem  
On Behalf Of: Licensed Private Investigators  
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee  
On Public Safety  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB5031

Good morning, I am writing in support of increasing Licensed Private Investigators hourly rate. I used to work in the public sector. My training classes, supplies, software, office equipment, office space and other expenses were paid for by city government. Now, I work for indigent clients supporting them through the legal process. I have a lot of expenses that include, office space, technology and office equipment, software, and training classes. I have to take on too many cases to keep my business profitable. A higher hourly wage would allow me to concentrate more on individual clients and reduce the number of hours I need to work to be profitable.

Additionally, I have been trying to recruit other qualified people to become Licensed Private Investigators. With more investigators, we can better assist attorneys while keeping our case loads smaller. I commonly hear from these qualified people that they could not afford to start a business and provide for their families at the rates currently offered. While discussing possible rate increases in the future, they often say that \$75 an hour would make it more attractive for them to assist indigent clients. These people are qualified trained professionals who offer skill sets advantageous to criminal defense in Oregon.

In closing, I would like to say again that I support the raising of the hourly rates for Licensed Private Investigators working for indigent defense in Oregon. Thank you.

Kenneth W. Fandrem



## THEKENZIEGROUP

330 NE Lincoln St. Suite 100

Hillsboro, OR 97124

971-357-5202 | [Office@thekenziegroup.com](mailto:Office@thekenziegroup.com)

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March 19, 2025

To Whom It May Concern:

The Oregon Association of Licensed Investigators firmly supports POP 104 and decisively endorses the proposed increase in investigator pay. We expect this crucial rate increase to be implemented effective July 2025. Public defense investigators have suffered from significantly diminished compensation compared to 1985, especially when adjusted for inflation.

In 1985, investigators earned \$25 per hour, which is equivalent to \$75 per hour today. We rightfully demand to be restored to the pay rate that reflects our worth and the critical role we play in the public defense system. The current low compensation is a major barrier to recruiting and retaining qualified investigators.

Raising this rate will not only help us keep our experienced team but also attract the new talent that is essential to meet the growing demands of public defense. When investigators are in short supply, attorneys are forced to take on tasks that should be performed by professionals, driving up costs and limiting their ability to take on more cases.

Expanding our investigator workforce will ensure that vital tasks are handled efficiently and economically, benefiting the entire legal process. Effectively addressing the public defense crisis in Oregon requires our ability to recruit and retain skilled investigators. Any delay in this rate increase, even by six months, would critically undermine our efforts to resolve this pressing issue. We call for the immediate implementation of this vital rate change in July.

This decisive action will enable us to retain and hire qualified investigators and to offer the competitive benefits we need to attract the best talent. Together, we will strengthen public defense and ensure that the rights of those we serve are fully upheld.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Cristina Lougal

Submitter: Dawn Hartwell  
On Behalf Of: Hart 2 Hart Investigations  
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee  
On Public Safety  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB5031

Hello, my name is Dawn Hartwell with Hart 2 Hart Investigations. We opened our business in 2017 when the pay was \$29 an hour. My husband, Troy Hartwell, has extensive law enforcement and federal police training which has played a huge benefit in working for the state of Oregon as a Criminal Defense Investigator. to the attorneys. He understands the law on both sides and is passionate about justice. What started with him working solo and me working in the corporate world, we survived on what we had with 1/2 of my pay going toward medical coverage for us. As our business grew, we had to make a choice...for me to continue to work to cover our benefits and or join my husband to help the business. That means no benefits, no hourly pay but to help the business continue to grow.

It has been hard, extremely hard to cover all the expenses it takes to run a business, advance all the mileage, and records (outrageous cost that we carry and pay interest on) , cover our benefits, and help develop new investigators. We do not clock in and out - we work all hours. We need to be treated and respected by the state and a fair wage is a good start.

Thank you,  
Dawn Hartwell

Good evening,

My name is Cristina Lougal, I am the Principle Investigator at The Kenzie Group.

We currently work cases all over the state of Oregon. We work all criminal cases ranging from minor misdemeanors, class C and B felonies, ballot measure 11 crimes and more serious crimes such as Murder and J-Law cases.

We provide service and expertise that is not only crucial to maintaining a balance in the justice system but is also necessary for a Criminal Defense Attorney to effectively represent and provide a rigorous defense for their clients.

We have seen numerous changes in our Industry. We have witnessed an explosion in the amount of digital discovery that is associated with a criminal case, We now process and analyze hundreds of gigabytes of information if not more in any given case, especially with grand jury testimony and BWC (Body Worn Camera footage).

In order to be good at our job, Investigators need to have technical expertise, interviewing skills, report writing, discovery management, and organizational ability these are just some of a long list of needed skills for a decent criminal defense Investigator to possess.

In our industry, it is very rare to find an already licensed and seasoned Private Investigator. With that being said, we need to provide training and mentorship to those individuals who are not currently licensed but have a desire to become a Criminal Defense Investigator, this can be very challenging in this ever-changing environment.

Continuing education is not just a requirement but a need to stay relevant and serve our community properly.

With OPDC current rate for investigators at \$55 an hour, it makes it extremely difficult to attract, train, equip and retain good, qualified people who are motivated to provide exceptional service.

As far as timing, obviously the sooner this could be implemented the sooner, Investigators like me throughout the state can more effectively assist in the unrepresented crisis.

With an increase to \$75 an hour, we can attract more qualified people, offer more comprehensive training and keep technologically viable. My agency would pass this increase on to our contractors and everyone would benefit, especially the defendants.

In 1985 investigators were paid \$25/hr. The equivalent of that today is \$75/hr. We are asking only to be brought current to the same pay rate that we were paid in 1985.

Currently we struggle to recruit and retain investigators in public defense due to the low rate. Increasing the rate will keep more investigators in state public defense and will attract desperately needed new investigators.



Where there are not enough investigators, attorneys must do tasks that would otherwise be done by investigators. More investigators mean that these tasks can be done for less money, and attorneys can take more cases.

This increase would allow us to create a better balance between the investigators and the Attorneys, thus allowing us to Recruit and retain investigators which is a key component to resolving the public defense crisis in Oregon.

Delaying the rate increase by six months further delays progress toward resolving the public defense crisis. We are asking for the rate change to be implemented in July of this year.

Respectfully,

Cristina Lougal



**THEKENZIEGROUP**

330 NE Lincoln Street Suite 100

Hillsboro, OR 97124

971-448-8383 | [al@thekenziegroup.com](mailto:al@thekenziegroup.com)

Good evening,

My name is Steven Lougal , I am a Private Investigator at The Kenzie Group.

We currently work cases all over the state of Oregon. We work all criminal cases ranging from minor misdemeanors, class C and B felonies, ballot measure 11 crimes and more serious crimes such as Murder and J-Law cases.

We provide service and expertise that is not only crucial to maintaining a balance in the justice system but is also necessary for a Criminal Defense Attorney to effectively represent and provide a rigorous defense for their clients.

We have seen numerous changes in our Industry. We have witnessed an explosion in the amount of digital discovery that is associated with a criminal case, We now process and analyze hundreds of gigabytes of information if not more in any given case, especially with grand jury testimony and BWC (Body Worn Camera footage).

In order to be good at our job, Investigators need to have technical expertise, interviewing skills, report writing, discovery management, and organizational ability these are just some of a long list of needed skills for a decent criminal defense Investigator to possess.

In our industry, it is very rare to find an already licensed and seasoned Private Investigator. With that being said, we need to provide training and mentorship to those individuals who are not currently licensed but have a desire to become a Criminal Defense Investigator, this can be very challenging in this ever-changing environment.

Continuing education is not just a requirement but a need to stay relevant and serve our community properly.

With OPDC current rate for investigators at \$55 an hour, it makes it extremely difficult to attract, train, equip and retain good, qualified people who are motivated to provide exceptional service.

With an increase to \$75 an hour, we can attract more qualified people, offer more comprehensive training and keep technologically viable

Currently we struggle to recruit and retain investigators in public defense due to the low rate. Increasing the rate will keep more investigators in state public defense and will attract desperately needed new investigators.

When there is a lack of investigators, attorneys must do tasks that would otherwise be done by investigators. More investigators mean that these tasks can be done for less money, and attorneys can take more cases.

This increase would allow us to create a better balance between the investigators and the Attorneys, thus allowing us to Recruit and retain investigators which is a key component to resolving the public defense crisis in Oregon.

Delaying the rate increase by six months further delays progress toward resolving the public defense crisis. We are asking for the rate change to be implemented in July of this year.

Respectfully,

Steven Lougal

Submitter: Dawn Krantz  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee  
On Public Safety  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB5031

Chair Broadman, Members of the Committee:

My name is Dawn Krantz, and I am a criminal defense investigator with 20 years of experience in public defense.

Oregon's public defense crisis has left 4,000 people without access to their constitutional right to legal representation. Current efforts focus on hiring and retaining public defense attorneys are critical to fixing the problem.

As investigators, we do work that, if not done by us, must be done by attorneys. When there aren't enough investigators, attorneys must take on investigative work themselves—driving up costs and limiting the number of cases they can handle.

We struggle to recruit and retain investigators at the current rate. Many experienced investigators are leaving for federal work which pays nearly double or for private practice, where they earn \$150–\$175 per hour. The current rate for defense investigators is 1/3 less than what it was in 1985 when adjusted for inflation.

A rate increase of \$75 per hour is essential to retaining and attracting skilled professionals and ending the public defense crisis. By attracting and retaining investigators at an industry-appropriate rate, Oregon will spend less money on attorneys while allowing them to take more cases.

I urge you to pass this increase and make it effective in July 2025 to prevent further delays in eliminating the backlog of unrepresented defendants awaiting representation.

Thank you.

# PHILIPS CONSULTING GROUP

March 20, 2025

Hon. Sen. Broadman, Co-Chair

Hon. Rep. Evans, Co-Chair

Members, Joint Committee On Ways and Means, Subcommittee On Public Safety

RE: *Public Defense Investigators Pay Rate Increase – POP 104*

My name is Rachel Philips, I have been working as an attorney in public defense for over 20 years, and I am writing to urge you to support the increase in the rate paid to public defense investigators included in the POP 104 of the OPDC proposed budget, and to support rapid implementation of the rate change, making it effective in July of 2025.

As you all are well aware, Oregon's criminal justice system is in the midst of an ongoing public defense crisis. According to the unrepresented dashboard, as of March 19, 2025 there are 5,606 unrepresented individuals across the state.

All of these unrepresented individuals need qualified attorneys to represent them, and those attorneys need qualified investigators working as part of the defense team, in order to provide a constitutionally adequate defense to each individual. In addition to the large numbers of attorneys leaving public defense, investigators have been leaving public defense in equal measure.

The investigator workforce is dwindling for two reasons:

- 1) the historically low rate of pay, and
- 2) the 5-6 weeks it takes the Oregon Public Defense Commission to pay investigators after they have submitted their invoices for completed work.

In 1985 investigators were paid \$25/hour. The equivalent of that rate today is \$75/hour. The current rate is \$55/hour.

Investigators don't submit invoices for completed hours on a case until the case is closed or they have exhausted the pre-authorized hours for that case. Meaning, once an investigator has received pre-authorization for a set number of hours (generally in amounts of 20 or 40 hours per authorization), they may not submit an invoice for that authorization until they have completed working the total hours authorized. If a case is in the investigation stage, very often it can be months before an investigator has reached the number of hours necessary to submit an invoice, and once that invoice is submitted, it will take 5-6 weeks for OPDC to process and pay that invoice. Imagine trying to run a small business as a private investigator with an almost 2-month lag between a submitted invoice and payment on that invoice.

# PHILIPS CONSULTING GROUP

Moreover, as independent contractors, investigators are responsible for their own health insurance, state licensing fees and insurance, continuing education requirements, office supplies and overhead, along with the personal expenses everyone shoulders, such as food, gas and housing for themselves and their family members.

Investigators play a critical role in criminal cases: effective public defense requires investigators with knowledge and/or expertise in a broad range of areas, including record collection and management, FOIA and public records requests, mobile phone data extraction, computer forensics, social media analysis, and multi-jurisdictional and cross-agency investigations and prosecutions. Additionally, investigators must be adept at interviewing witnesses, locating and verifying evidence, analyzing surveillance footage, and working collaboratively with defense teams to uncover mitigating factors and wrongful prosecutions. Strengthening the investigative resources available to public defenders is essential to ensuring fair and thorough representation for every client.

This is especially critical and necessary work on the more serious felony cases, such as Ballot Measure 11 offenses and murder cases. An experienced and well-trained investigator can locate a key witness or piece of evidence that not only ensures there is a constitutionally adequate defense for the accused, it also helps ensure a just outcome.

Recruiting and retaining investigators at \$75/hour is a key component to resolving the public defense crisis in Oregon. I am urging you to support the rate change for investigators and to implement this rate change effective July 2025.

Sincerely,

*/s/Rachel Philips*

Rachel Philips

Attorney

Philips Consulting Group



## NATIONAL COUNCIL OF INVESTIGATION & SECURITY SERVICES

The National Voice of the Private Investigation & Security Professions

PO Box 200615, Evans, CO 80620

[president@nciss.org](mailto:president@nciss.org) | (800) 445-8408 | [www.NCISS.org](http://www.NCISS.org)

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Joint Committee on Ways and Means  
Subcommittee on Public Safety  
Oregon State Capitol  
900 Court Street NE, Room H-178  
Salem, Oregon 97301

March 19, 2025

### **RE: Written Testimony in Support of HB 5031 - Investigator Pay Increase Provisions in the Oregon Public Defense Commission (OPDC) Budget**

Dear Committee Members:

My name is Edward Ajaeb, and I am the President of the National Council of Investigation and Security Services (NCISS), a national association representing professional investigators and security professionals. I am also a resident of Oregon and a licensed Oregon private investigator.

I am writing today to express NCISS's strong support for provisions within HB 5031 which increase the rate of pay for public defense investigators; specifically, the proposed increase in investigator pay to \$75 per hour.

As president of NCISS and owner of an Oregon-based investigative firm myself, I have seen firsthand how increasing pay rates can directly lead to increased capacity, improved investigative outcomes, and enhanced case management. Implementation of the pay increase will empower investigative firms like mine to commit more resources to thorough and diligence investigations, expand investigative capacity, and take on more public defense cases—thus directly contributing to improving Oregon's broader public defense initiatives.

While we greatly appreciate and support the recognition of the critical role investigators play within Oregon's public defense system, we urge the legislature to implement this necessary pay increase effective July 2025, rather than delaying until January 2026.

Investigators in public defense have experienced significant wage stagnation over the past four decades. To put this into perspective, investigators in 1985 earned approximately \$25 per hour, which equates to roughly \$75 per hour today when adjusted for inflation. The current rate severely undervalues our profession and inhibits our ability to recruit and retain qualified investigators and dedicate the necessary resources and overhead to effectively manage cases. By

implementing the increase in pay sooner, Oregon will not only correct decades-long compensation inequity but also immediately alleviate pressing workforce and resource shortages.

The low pay rate for public defense investigators has directly contributed to recruitment and retention difficulties. This shortage compels attorneys to undertake investigative tasks, thereby reducing their efficiency, increasing costs, limiting their capacity to handle additional cases, and taking already-limited legal resources away from effective case and client representation. Providing fair and competitive compensation will attract new talent to public defense and encourage experienced investigators to remain in the profession, ultimately enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of Oregon's public defense system.

As president of our profession's national association, I am proud that Oregon has this unique opportunity to lead the nation by proactively addressing this critical element of public defense investigation reform. Implementation delays will only prolong the current challenges and forego desperately needed improvements. For the benefit of the entire public defense system—and ultimately the citizens relying upon it—we respectfully ask that the committee support an implementation date of July 2025.

On behalf of professional investigators in Oregon and across the nation, I thank you for your consideration and for your continued dedication to strengthening our state's public defense and judicial system.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'E. Ajaeb', with a stylized, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Edward J. Ajaeb

President,  
National Council of Investigation & Security Services



Submitter: Simeon Good

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee  
On Public Safety

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB5031

Honorable Members of the Public Defense Commission,

At the heart of public defense is a promise: that every person, no matter their circumstances, deserves a fair and thorough defense. But right now, that promise is at risk.

Investigators play a crucial role in uncovering the truth, ensuring that evidence is found, witnesses are interviewed, and cases are built with care. Yet, they are paid less today—when adjusted for inflation—than they were in 1985. As a result, we are losing skilled investigators, leaving attorneys stretched too thin, and delaying justice for those who need it most.

The Governor's budget takes an important step in correcting this, but delaying implementation until 2026 only deepens the crisis. Every extra day means more defendants waiting for their cases to move forward, more people sitting in jail when they shouldn't be, and more missed opportunities to uncover critical facts.

To truly address the public defense crisis, we must continue to invest in the people who make justice possible.

Respectfully,

Submitter: Brittney McCoy  
On Behalf Of: OALI and McCoy Investigations  
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee  
On Public Safety  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB5031

Good morning,

I am writing to express my strong support for Policy Option Package (POP) 104, which includes an increase in investigator pay for public defense cases to \$75/hour. I also urge you to implement this increase in July 2025 rather than delaying it until January 2026.

I have been a licensed investigator for only 18 months, yet already 35% of my caseload consists of retained cases at a rate of \$120/hour—more than double what we are currently paid for public defense work. While I did not set out to shift my focus away from public defense, the reality is that I have had to take on retained cases because there simply aren't enough licensed investigators to meet the demand for Oregon's criminal defense cases. The severe shortage means investigators can easily find work elsewhere at significantly higher rates. Without competitive pay, this gap will continue to grow, making it even harder to recruit and retain investigators in public defense.

I entered this field because I am passionate about justice and helping people. But as a single mother, financial realities dictate the balance of my caseload. Without a pay increase, I—and many others—will have no choice but to take on fewer OPDC cases in order to sustain a viable career.

In 1985, public defense investigators were paid \$25/hour—the equivalent of \$75/hour today when adjusted for inflation. This increase is not about getting ahead but about restoring pay to where it should have been all along. Without competitive wages, we will continue to lose investigators, worsening the strain on an already struggling public defense system.

With too few investigators, attorneys must take on investigative tasks themselves, greatly reducing efficiency and directly impacting the ability to uphold the Sixth Amendment right to effective counsel. This also comes at a much higher cost to OPDC—attorneys bill at significantly higher rates than investigators, meaning OPDC is ultimately paying more for work that should be done at a lower rate. Raising investigator pay is a necessary step toward resolving Oregon's public defense crisis in both effectiveness and cost efficiency.

Delaying this adjustment by six months will only prolong these challenges. I urge you

to support the immediate implementation of the \$75/hour rate in July 2025 to help attract and retain investigators who are essential to ensuring fair and effective legal representation.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Brittney McCoy, PI-ID# 115880

Submitter: Erin Howell  
On Behalf Of: Defense Investigators of Oregon  
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee  
On Public Safety  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB5031

Chair Broadman, Members of the Committee:

I am a criminal defense investigator with 18 years of experience in criminal defense.

I support POP 104 and the increase in investigator pay, but ask that the implementation for the rate increase take effect July 2025.

Where there are not enough investigators, attorneys must do tasks that would otherwise be done by investigators. More investigators mean that these tasks can be done for less money, and attorneys can take more cases.

Recruiting and retaining investigators is a key component to resolving the public defense crisis in Oregon

I urge you to pass this increase and make it effective in July 2025 to prevent further delays in eliminating the backlog of unrepresented defendants awaiting representation.

Thank you for your time,

Erin Howell  
E Howell Investigation  
PSID #41386

Submitter: Yonathan Yohannes DPSST# 84075

On Behalf Of: Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On Public Safety  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB5031

Honorable Members of the Public Defense Commission,

My name is Yonathan Yohannes and I've been a criminal defense investigator for over 8 years. Public defense rests on a simple promise: every person deserves a fair and thorough defense. Yet, that promise is at risk due to a severe shortage of criminal defense investigators. These professionals uncover critical evidence, but their wages—lower today than in 1985 when adjusted for inflation—have driven many away. As a result, attorneys are stretched thin, cases are delayed, and justice is denied. While the Governor's budget offers some relief, delaying implementation until 2026 will only worsen the crisis.

Investing in investigators not only ensures fairness but also saves taxpayers money. Skilled investigators help resolve cases efficiently, preventing unnecessary trials and costly incarcerations. Without them, attorneys are forced to take on investigative work, risking legal complications and further straining resources. A competitive wage would attract more investigators, strengthening the public defense system and ensuring justice moves swiftly.

Raising the investigator rate to \$75 per hour is a necessary step to rebuild a struggling system. Without action, the backlog of cases will grow, costing both time and taxpayer dollars. Strengthening public defense benefits not only defendants but the integrity and efficiency of our entire justice system.

Submitter: William Thomson

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee  
On Public Safety

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB5031

I strongly urge Oregon lawmakers to support increased wages for private investigators contracted through indigent defense funding. As a public defender, the investigators that I hire are invaluable. They are "force multipliers" that do not just add to my capacity, but multiply it. They are essential to my ability to represent clients to a constitutionally zealous standard. In my office, we used to joke that the only cases that had good outcomes were the ones that we had investigators working on.

Oregon is suffering from a crisis of defense representation for indigent defendants. Lawmakers would be hard pressed to find a more efficient way to allocate resources to ameliorate this crisis, because even at a higher rate of pay, investigators are still cheaper than attorneys, and as noted above, they do more than just supplement attorney efficacy, they multiply it.

Submitter: Richard Garbutt  
On Behalf Of: OPDC budget  
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee  
On Public Safety  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB5031

Greetings: I've been a criminal defense attorney for 47 years. FBI before that for 3.5 years. Now a PI myself. Investigators are not appreciated for their work, assistance and sometimes danger. Criminal defense is a loose team approach. Investigators are critical because the attorney cannot do that phase of the case because of time constraints and the fact they then become witnesses. To attract talented and competent investigators you have to recognize like all things you have to pay to get the best.

I certainly have a new appreciation of the job. The hours can suck, the overhead is punishing and their responsibility to be thorough, and accurate can be mentally taxing.

The profession is a true profession and \$75/hr is really just a good start.

Thank you:

Richard L Garbutt #108653 DPSST

Submitter: Robert Grady

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee  
On Public Safety

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB5031

Hi, I am writing, urging you to support POP 104 and increase investigator pay (hopefully by July 2025). I am a licensed investigator working primarily on civil litigation and insurance fraud related matters. I would seriously consider working criminal defense cases in the future if the hourly rate were increased as my colleagues are requesting.

Best regards,  
Robert Grady



To whom it may concern,

I support POP 104 and the increase in investigator pay but ask that the implementation for the rate increase take effect July 2025.

Public defense investigators are paid significantly less than what we were paid in 1985 when adjusted for inflation.

In 1985 investigators were paid \$25/hr. The equivalent of that today is \$75/hr. We are asking only to be brought current to the same pay rate that we were paid in 1985.

Currently we struggle to recruit and retain investigators in public defense due to the low rate. Increasing the rate will keep more investigators in state public defense and will attract desperately needed new investigators.

Where there are not enough investigators, attorneys must do tasks that would otherwise be done by investigators. More investigators mean that these tasks can be done for less money, and attorneys can take more cases.

Recruiting and retaining investigators is a key component to resolving the public defense crisis in Oregon

Delaying the rate increase by six months further delays progress toward resolving the public defense crisis. We are asking for the rate change to be implemented in July of this year.

Thank you for your consideration,

Brook Kremer  
PI ID #112248



March 20, 2025

Co-Chairs Broadman and Evans, members of the committee,

I am a criminal defense attorney with 13 years of experience. I am fairly new to the Oregon defense community, having spent most of my career working in Arizona.

I support POP 104 of the OPDC proposed budget, increasing investigator pay, as well as implementing the rate increase in July 2025.

While I am newer to Oregon's ongoing public defense crisis, it is already clear to me that we don't need to just add more defense attorneys, we also need to recruit and retain more qualified investigators. Working with qualified investigators with manageable workloads is essential to providing effective and efficient representation for indigent defendants.

I urge you to pass this increase and implement the rate increase in July 2025.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Thomas Henager', is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Thomas Henager  
Oregon State Bar # 213178  
Henager Law Firm, LLC  
Phone: 602.428.3000  
Email: [thomas@henagerlaw.com](mailto:thomas@henagerlaw.com)

Dan Chastain

12042 SE Sunnyside Rd. #488

Clackamas, OR, 97015

Chastaininvestigations7@gmail.com

503-482-9120

03/19/2025

[Office of the Public Defender Commission (OPDC)]

Subject: Support for a Long-Overdue Raise for OPDC-Funded Investigators

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing to express my strong support for a well-deserved and long-overdue raise for private investigators working under OPDC funding. These dedicated professionals play a crucial role in ensuring justice by conducting thorough investigations, gathering essential evidence, and assisting in the defense of indigent clients. Despite their significant contributions, their compensation has remained stagnant for far too long, failing to reflect the rising costs of living, the complexity of their work, and the invaluable service they provide.

OPDC-funded investigators handle cases that require meticulous attention to detail, persistence, and a deep commitment to justice. They often work under difficult conditions, facing tight deadlines, uncooperative witnesses, and challenging case circumstances. Their efforts are instrumental in safeguarding the constitutional right to a fair defense, ensuring that all individuals—regardless of their financial status—receive a thorough and just legal representation.

Unfortunately, the current pay scale does not adequately recognize the expertise and risks involved in this profession. A failure to adjust wages to match inflation and industry

standards not only undermines morale but also risks the loss of experienced professionals who are essential to the integrity of our justice system. Moreover, competitive pay is necessary to attract and retain skilled investigators who are willing to dedicate themselves to this critical work.

I urge OPDC to take immediate action in addressing this long-standing issue by implementing a pay increase for OPDC-funded investigators. Fair compensation will not only improve job satisfaction and retention but will also enhance the quality of investigative services provided to public defenders, ultimately strengthening our legal system as a whole.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I appreciate your commitment to justice and trust that you will prioritize this important matter. I would be happy to discuss this further and provide additional insights if needed.

Sincerely,

Dan Chastain

Submitter: Sierra Hanover

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee  
On Public Safety

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB5031

Private investigation for indigent defense requires contact with clients that are often without a phone, stable housing, or transportation. Many times, you are working to keep in contact with your client while simultaneously locating and contacting witnesses or involved parties. Frequent and repeated contact is not abnormal and as previously referenced contact can be limited due to the client's financial hardships. Although I have limited experience as an investigator, private investigation for indigent defense has taken me to many different places. Some of those places are the county jails, locations frequented by those afflicted with addiction and mental health issues and trap houses. I work alongside many investigators which I trust and respect that frequently encounter hostile or violent subjects and environments during the course of their investigations. I believe that the men and women I work alongside are very deserving of a wage that reflects their commitment to unearthing the truth and working with clients who are deserving of a fair defense.

I stand firmly in support of HB 5031 to raise the investigator hourly rate to \$75 effective July 2025.

July 14, 2025

Chair Nash and Member of the Commission:

Attached are 52 letters from public defense investigators, attorneys, and community members that were sent to the legislature this session in support of the critical need to increase defense investigator rates to at least \$75 per hour.

Please note that this issue had more written testimony than ANY OTHER ISSUE in the OPDC budget bill by a huge magnitude. 70% of the 74 letters giving written testimony on HB 5031 addressed the need for a \$75/hr. rate for defense investigators in order to fix an unsustainable situation in the face of the ongoing lack of available public defense providers.

We cannot overemphasize the importance of this issue as part of resolving the ongoing public defense crisis.

We encourage you to review the point of view of all of these members of our community so that you can fully understand the impact of continuing to offer defense investigators a rate that is less than was paid in 1985 when adjusted for inflation, is 2 to 3 times less than federal rates and the rates paid by private attorneys, and which is unsustainable for investigators who want to make a living working on state public defense cases.

## View results

Respondent

72

Anonymous

264:11

Time to complete

### 1. Full Name \*

James Comstock

### 2. Organization/Entity Name \*

Insight Legal Investigation

### 3. Email \*

jamesbcomstock@gmail.com

### 4. Phone Number \*

503 510 0559

### 5. Public Comments must be directly related to agenda items for this meeting. Please specify which agenda topic your comments will relate to below. \*

Action Item: Schedule of Guideline Amounts Update

### 6. What type of public comment are you submitting? \*

☒ Written

☐ Verbal - Virtually Via Zoom

### 7. Written Public Comment

If you'd like to submit attachments, please send them to [info@opdc.state.or.us](mailto:info@opdc.state.or.us) in addition to filling out this form

Please see my email with subject line "Written Comment - Action Item: Schedule of Guideline Amounts Update - Comstock Letter" and attached letter sent to [info@opdc.state.or.us](mailto:info@opdc.state.or.us). Please confirm receipt of that email and attachment.

### 8. Additional Notes



July 14, 2025

Chair Nash, Members of the Commission:

For over 10 years, my colleagues and I have been advocating for a fair and living wage for defense investigators.

**In 1985, defense investigators were paid \$25 per hour. Adjusted for inflation, this is the equivalent of \$75 per hour today.**

As pay rates for defense investigators working with OPDC have lagged further and further behind the rates paid by the federal courts, other states, and privately retained clients, defense investigators have consistently left Oregon state public defense work in favor of work that pays a living wage.

We are deeply disappointed and concerned at the proposal to pay defense investigators \$59 per hour – over 21% less than what was paid in 1985.

Oregon defense investigators have been able to limp along through the temporary payment of \$75 per hour by taking some cases with unrepresented defendants through the THIP program. Now that the THIP program has ended, defense investigators are not even able to limp along.

By paying defense investigators an appropriate rate on some limited cases for three years, while showing through market studies that indicate that the current rate is vastly too low, OPDC has given defense investigators hope that they could make a living doing state public defense work. By taking the \$75 per hour lifeline away, OPDC will drive defense investigators away from state public defense in favor of more sustainable options.

**“Revolutions are not triggered by those who suffer the most. It is often the case that the people who revolt are those whose situation has been improving and who suddenly find their progress blocked.”**

*Democracy in America, Alexis de Tocqueville*

Though it seems counterintuitive, failure to pay defense investigators enough to keep working in state public defense will actually cost OPDC **more** money and will at the same time limit the amount of cases that attorneys who must personally take up the slack are able to take.

If an attorney cannot hire an experienced defense investigator due to the low rates and lack of availability, the attorney must do work that the defense investigator would do themselves. This work is done at more than double the cost that would be paid to a defense investigator at \$75 per hour, and at the same time it causes attorneys to spend more time on each case, resulting in even less ability to take on more cases.



To put it another way – in a time when everyone agrees that we need more attorneys to take on more cases, failure to recruit and retain defense investigators stands squarely in opposition to this critical goal.

Under the proposed rates, attorneys will be paid 10% less than they were paid on THIP cases. Meanwhile, defense investigators will be paid over 20% less than we were paid on THIP cases and will still not be paid the same as what we were paid in 1985.

Funding attorneys while disproportionally funding defense investigators is rather like buying a car but allocating no budget for fuel. In a time of a deep and ongoing public defense crisis, this simply makes zero business sense. I believe that the failure to see the folly in the current proposal is in large measure due to the constant turnover of OPDC directors, management, and Commissioners. Since we have been advocating for a \$75 per hour rate, OPDS has had 7 different directors, and 4 budget directors. There are zero Commission members currently serving who were in place when we began raising this issue. It appears that there may be insufficient institutional memory and understanding of the problems faced by attorneys and defense investigators to recognize the deep problems connected to the proposed defense investigator rate.

The lack of business sense in the current proposal makes me think of the following unattributed quote:

“Making a mule do twice the work for half the feed is guaranteed to kill the mule. But you save on feed, so there’s that.”

**The Commission has received in the material for this meeting 52 letters which were sent to the legislature by defense investigators, attorneys, and community members advocating for a \$75 per hour rate for defense investigators. I encourage you to read these letters which firmly and directly lay bare the problems with the low rate of pay offered to defense investigators.**

I implore you to do more than partially fund a solution to the public defense crisis, and to make the smart and logical business decision to adjust the defense investigator rate to \$75 per hour to save money spent on attorneys, and to move more quickly toward to end of the public defense crisis in Oregon.

James Comstock  
Insight Legal Investigation

## View results

Respondent

64

Anonymous

21:48

Time to complete

### 1. Full Name \*

Wayne Gunderson

### 2. Organization/Entity Name \*

Gunderson Services, LLC

### 3. Email \*

gunderson@gundersonservices.com

### 4. Phone Number \*

503.490.8959

### 5. Public Comments must be directly related to agenda items for this meeting. Please specify which agenda topic your comments will relate to below. \*

OPDC VENDORS

### 6. What type of public comment are you submitting? \*



Written



Verbal - Virtually Via Zoom

### 7. Written Public Comment

If you'd like to submit attachments, please send them to [info@opdc.state.or.us](mailto:info@opdc.state.or.us) in addition to filling out this form

As a 20+ year Private Investigator who has/does take on Indigent cases in multiple states and at different levels, the Oregon four-dollar increase is not an increase in my opinion. Please go back to the discussion table and work harder to show there is an understanding that the Defense Investigator is a valued and important part of our criminal court system. We live in a great country that allows us to have a defense when the government lays claim that we have done something wrong. The Defense Investigator helps us when going up against the giant that is our government. The Defense Investigator is worthy (if trained and experienced) far more than what is being discussed. Please help to have good pay for expert work.

### 8. Additional Notes

## View results

Respondent

65

Anonymous

04:10

Time to complete

### 1. Full Name \*

Kaitlin Kelly

### 2. Organization/Entity Name \*

Kelly Law, LLC

### 3. Email \*

kaitlin@kaitlinkellylaw.com

### 4. Phone Number \*

503-713-5935

### 5. Public Comments must be directly related to agenda items for this meeting. Please specify which agenda topic your comments will relate to below. \*

Billing Policy (Invoice Submission)

### 6. What type of public comment are you submitting? \*

☒

Written

☐

Verbal - Virtually Via Zoom

### 7. Written Public Comment

If you'd like to submit attachments, please send them to [info@opdc.state.or.us](mailto:info@opdc.state.or.us) in addition to filling out this form

\*letter emailed to info@opdc.state.or.us

### 8. Additional Notes

Kelly Law, LLC  
621 SW Alder St, Suite 600  
Portland, OR 97205  
503-713-5935 | kaitlin@kaitlinkellylaw.com

July 14, 2025

To the Oregon Public Defense Commission,

My name is Kaitlin Kelly and I am a juvenile public defense provider, practicing both dependency and delinquency law. I have worked as a juvenile public defender since I was sworn into the bar in October 2018, and hope to spend my entire career doing this work. There is no community I am prouder and happier to be a part of than the public defense community.

I do all of my work as an hourly attorney and do not hold a contract position. I founded Kelly Law, LLC in 2023 and have worked with OPDC to serve dependency and delinquency clients around the state since that time. I would like to provide public comment on the upcoming agenda / action item regarding the Billing and Invoice Submission Policy, specifically section 1.4.

Currently hourly attorneys are encouraged to submit invoices every 30 days, with a minimum billing amount of \$130. This was a significant and welcome change from the previous policy of submitting invoices only after every hearing or qualifying event, which in juvenile law, was often few and far between. The updated policy was incredibly helpful in budgeting for my firm, ensuring I can pay my staff, and ensuring that we could have a consistent, fairly predictable flow of income which allows my firm to continue to represent clients across the state. The proposed policy change before you this week that “hourly billing for attorneys should be submitted once the cumulative total reaches five hundred dollars (\$500) or every 90 days” is frankly an untenable setback for hourly practitioners. I am asking you to consider a compromise.

I understand that the OPDC accounts payable department receives more than 4,000+ invoices per month. My office frequently attended the monthly meetings OPDC offered with accounts payable and has great relationships with the workers in that department. We

understand and are empathetic to their demanding workload and in return, trust that they want to pay our invoices as quickly as they can. The accounts payable staff are genuinely invested and passionate about the work of public defenders. However, their relief should be OPDC's responsibility and not be at the expense of the practitioners.

This new billing policy makes taking hourly cases less possible and will de-incentivize practitioners from taking hourly cases, which will further contribute to the unrepresented crisis. For example, if my firm's billing was submitted last month for only the cases where I met the \$500 threshold to invoice, it would be a 20-25% decrease in our firm's monthly invoices, on average. I understand that these sums would be paid at a future time, and the newly approved hourly rate increase may account for the difference on a monthly basis. However, the tracking of the invoices that need to be carried forward due to dollar amount and which need to be carried forward based on duration between billings is needlessly and unnecessarily confusing and complex. It is, to put it simply, not a good use of practitioners' resources and time.

I employ one associate attorney and one support staff and our firm represents approximately 150 clients in 16 Oregon counties. We fill a need for contractors around the state who have conflicts, caseload thresholds, or in cases where there simply aren't enough non-conflicted attorneys for all the parties in a case. We deeply value our clients and OPDC's support in serving them. We want to continue to do that in a way that is both easier for OPDC and meets the needs of hourly practitioners in a way that is fair to both. We kindly ask that this time that we spend on our valuable work be compensated more frequently than every \$500 / 90 days. If a middle ground of being paid every \$300 or 90 days would be acceptable, that would be a fair compromise in our opinion.

Thank you all for your time and consideration of this letter.

Sincerely,

*Kaitlin Kelly*  
Kaitlin Kelly

## View results

Respondent

66

Anonymous

08:53

Time to complete

### 1. Full Name \*

Patrick Higgins

### 2. Organization/Entity Name \*

Higgins & Associates Investigative Services

### 3. Email \*

higginspi@comcast.net

### 4. Phone Number \*

503-519-4200

### 5. Public Comments must be directly related to agenda items for this meeting. Please specify which agenda topic your comments will relate to below. \*

Pay increase for Investigators

### 6. What type of public comment are you submitting? \*

☒ Written

☐ Verbal - Virtually Via Zoom

### 7. Written Public Comment

If you'd like to submit attachments, please send them to [info@opdc.state.or.us](mailto:info@opdc.state.or.us) in addition to filling out this form

I have been doing indigent defense work since 1998. My cases that I am currently working on is at a rate of \$75.00 per hour. I believe this is a working wage for investigators who has to cover all of the own expenses and overhead. I understand this is below the Federal level investigator rate but it is workable if the State would match the Federal Defense Investigator rate it would be great.

## View results

Respondent

67

Anonymous

01:43

Time to complete

### 1. Full Name \*

Steven Wilson

### 2. Organization/Entity Name \*

DIO/self

### 3. Email \*

swilsn@gmail.com

### 4. Phone Number \*

503-481-0671

### 5. Public Comments must be directly related to agenda items for this meeting. Please specify which agenda topic your comments will relate to below. \*

Proposed rates

### 6. What type of public comment are you submitting? \*



Written



Verbal - Virtually Via Zoom

### 7. Written Public Comment

If you'd like to submit attachments, please send them to [info@opdc.state.or.us](mailto:info@opdc.state.or.us) in addition to filling out this form

Too long for this, sent via email

### 8. Additional Notes

Portland Investigators  
P.O. Box 10673  
Portland, OR 97296  
OR Lic #33888  
P. 503-481-0671 F. 866-519-6241  
[portlandinvestigators@gmail.com](mailto:portlandinvestigators@gmail.com)

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July 14, 2025

Chair Nash, members of the Board, and Executive Director Sanchagrin:

My name is Steve Wilson. I am a defense investigator and have been working on indigent cases in Oregon for over 22 years. I am a member of Defense Investigators of Oregon (DIO) and am the co-chair of the OCLDA Investigators' Committee.

I am writing in response to the proposed rate increase for fact investigators, from \$55 to \$59 an hour. For many reasons I believe this is woefully inadequate and even detrimental to OPDC's goal of reducing unrepresented parties, providing quality representation, and protecting taxpayer dollars.

Implicit in this limited rate hike appears to be lack of understanding of the value of investigation in criminal defense, a lack of appreciation for the economic reality of independent contractors who make up the majority of investigators, and a shocking lack of outreach and stakeholder engagement. Investigators have been advocating for an inflation-adjusted return to the rates from 1988 for nearly a decade—personally I have been before this commission many times since 2019 advocating for a pay rate that is reasonably-competitive and that keeps pace with inflation.

OPDC and investigators do not seem to be remotely on the same page on this issue.

Lawyers know that defense investigators provide an essential function in public defense. They are essential to case strategy and can help settle cases and avoid trial. Right now, due to inflationary pressure and competing wages, there are not enough public defense investigators. The current proposed rate will not remedy that.

Financially, there is little incentive for investigators to take Oregon state cases when they can be paid a minimum of \$90/hr to work on federal public defense cases and, here in Willamette Valley, up to \$150/hr to work on retained cases.

Investigators who are willing to travel can get significantly higher rates in neighboring states as well. Oregon investigators regularly fly to Alaska to work on federal cases. Oregon



investigators who work in Idaho at higher rates than Oregon pays. Even OPDC's own trial division, with jobs that include sick leave and vacation time, and provide healthcare, are competing to pull investigators away from contract work on indigent cases. OPDC may not wish to compete against all these other sources of income, but it is the current economic reality.

Not only is there financial competition from other agencies and private law firms, the proposed rates also do not consider the cost of living in the valley, where the majority of investigators work. Our cost of living in the Metro area, for example, is about 40 percent higher than the national average, comparable with Tacoma, where investigators are paid on a sliding scale from \$70 to \$95/hr, or Contra Costa County in SF's east bay, where investigators are paid \$80/hr.

These rates also fail to factor in the overhead for self-employed investigators. Along with the inflationary issue, investigators have increased overhead costs: licensing, liability insurance, office supplies, rent, medical insurance, and the computer hardware and software now required to manage increasingly complex digital discovery.

Keeping the rate low betrays a lack of vision for an effective public defense system. For the most efficient use of taxpayer dollars, our state should aim to increase the number of support staff, such as investigators and paralegals, a more cost effective and proven way to increase caseloads than just hiring more attorneys. By not providing financial incentives to increase support staff, OPDC is effectively requiring attorneys to perform their own investigations. This means that the state is not only paying an actual higher rate for investigation but also having investigation work be done by people who are not trained for it. In my experience of over two decades of public defense investigation work, I have seen many attorneys who are not good at doing investigation work. It is not the same as the job they trained for and requires a distinct skill set.

Poor investigation work leads to worse outcomes for clients and a greater likelihood of a PCR, all of which is a financially-inefficient use of taxpayer dollars.

In addition, the way that the rate hike maintained a difference between mitigation and fact rates points to a lack of understanding about the two disciplines. There appears to be no institutional memory at OPDC. The disparity in fact and mitigation rates exists because over a decade ago the state needed to create an economic incentive to keep death penalty mitigators in Oregon, since Washington and California and the feds paid so much better.

This internal rate disparity is going to increase the number of investigators requesting mitigation rates on cases. Nearly all major felonies have a degree of mitigation work, typically done by people who are primarily, but not wholly, fact investigators. I believe that you will now see more and more people requesting a portion of their hours be pre-approved as mitigation due to the disparity created by OPDC out of what looks like ignorance of its own history.

Mitigators and fact investigators—often the same person—should both be paid the same rate, \$75/hr.

OPDC's own POP 104 asked for \$75 for fact investigators and \$85 for mitigation specialists as part of the mandates set by ORS 151.216 and SB 337 (2023). OPDC's own internal study of providers, produced by Moss Adams last year, recommended \$74/hr as an appropriate rate for defense investigators. We have been asking for \$75/hr regularly. \$75/hr is competitive, allows for overhead, and places the rate where it was in 1988, once adjusted for inflation.

Finally, viewing the proposed rate outside of a financial lens, this proposed rate does nothing to repair the badly-damaged relationship between investigator providers and OPDC. The actions of OPDC over many years have destroyed trust between the commission and what might be the most important group of providers after lawyers. The current wage proposal, which is being offered without significant outreach or conversations with the investigator community, and which ignores the requests for a stable, inflation-adjusted rate that we have been making for years, only increases that distrust.

I think OPDC is on dangerous ground here. I think that you are underestimating the actual and the financial value of good investigation and are making a short-sighted decision that pre-supposes a lack of political will by investigators. To resolve this, OPDC should make an effort to speak with investigators, hear our concerns and discuss the wage issue openly and with good faith.

I believe that the deficit in the investigator workforce can be addressed. A stable, reasonable hourly wage – one that is competitive, even if not equal to hourly rates we receive from other sources – will bring investigators back to state public defense work, encourage new investigators into the profession, and allow lawyers to do the work they were trained to do.

Thank you.

Steve Wilson DPSSST 33888

## View results

Respondent

68

Anonymous

109:49

Time to complete

1. Full Name \*

Thad Higgins

2. Organization/Entity Name \*

WCN Investigations & Consulting, LLC

3. Email \*

thad.wcn@gmail.com

4. Phone Number \*

541-480-7950

5. Public Comments must be directly related to agenda items for this meeting. Please specify which agenda topic your comments will relate to below. \*

Rate Increase for Private Investigators

6. What type of public comment are you submitting? \*

☒ Written

☐ Verbal - Virtually Via Zoom

## 7. Written Public Comment

If you'd like to submit attachments, please send them to [info@opdc.state.or.us](mailto:info@opdc.state.or.us) in addition to filling out this form

Thank you for considering a rate increase for PIs! As has been discussed, the PI rate has not kept pace with cost of living and other considerations. We don't receive benefits as the police, and DA's investigators do. Our rate is low considering that many of us pay for the following:

- Office Space
- Office Supplies and equipment
- Wear and tear on our vehicles
- Investigative tools such as DMV accounts, TLO that charge site and search fees
- Self Defense training and tools - we work around dangerous people
- Insurances - medical, business, liability, bonding, etc

I think it is important to note that of the current \$55/hour rate - I really only "Keep" around \$35/hour, for doing detective level work. And some of our work is in homeless or other areas with a high degree of risk. We have no backup or safety net.

I have a small team of great PIs - but most have to have a second job. I have also lost partners to higher paying job offers. Just lost a star on my team to 911, she is now a dispatcher.

A \$4/hour increase would be nice, of course a raise is helpful! What we really need is to be at the \$75/hour that has been previously discussed. We make that on Federal cases. Our rate for private cases is \$100/hour, and I think we are on the low side of what some PIs are charging.

Thanks for your consideration!

Thad

## 8. Additional Notes

Thanks for taking to consider this issue! I understand your plate is full and that there is a big picture here as well.

## View results

Respondent

69

Anonymous

57:15

Time to complete

### 1. Full Name \*

Dana Brandon

### 2. Organization/Entity Name \*

Senior Case Manager Administrator PCRCP (independent contractor)

### 3. Email \*

dana.brandon@pcrpcm.org

### 4. Phone Number \*

503-558-6805

### 5. Public Comments must be directly related to agenda items for this meeting. Please specify which agenda topic your comments will relate to below. \*

Budget

### 6. What type of public comment are you submitting? \*

☒

Written

☐

Verbal - Virtually Via Zoom

### 7. Written Public Comment

If you'd like to submit attachments, please send them to [info@opdc.state.or.us](mailto:info@opdc.state.or.us) in addition to filling out this form

Written Comments will be emailed to the address above.

### 8. Additional Notes

**7/16/25**

**OPDC, Written Public Comment**

**Request for Inclusion in 2025-27 Inflationary Increases for Contract Providers**

I am writing in response to the July 3, 2025, OPDC newsletter, which announced the incorporation of new provider rates for the 2025–27 contracts. The newsletter stated that contracts with consortia, non-profits, and law firms will receive a 6.8% increase to account for inflation, and that these increases will be backdated to cover the full biennium. Additionally, hourly attorneys will also see rate adjustments.

While PCRP Case Managers and Administrators were not explicitly mentioned, it is critical that inflationary increases be applied to **all** contract providers. Historically, our roles have been included in such adjustments, and OPDC should continue this equitable and consistent practice.

Inflation impacts all service providers, regardless of contract type. The critical work performed by PCRP Case Managers and Administrators directly supports OPDC's mission and the integrity of public defense services. Ensuring fair compensation and consistent rate increases is vital for recruitment, retention, and sustainability.

Adequate support for the Parent Child Representation Program is essential to improving outcomes for clients ensuring high-quality legal representation in juvenile court proceedings. As the program continues to demonstrate its value, it is our hope that it remains on track for thoughtful, phased expansion across the state. This can only be achieved if the program's infrastructure – including case managers and administrators – is fully supported through appropriate, inflation-adjusted funding. I have included our June Administrator Report that highlights recent client outcomes and the role of PCRP Case Managers in supporting family stability and reunification.

We respectfully request confirmation that inflationary increases will also be applied to contracts for PCRP Case Managers and Administrators for the 2025–27 biennium.

Thank you for your continued leadership and support.

Sincerely,

**Dana Brandon, MSW**  
**Senior Case Manager Administrator**  
**Parent Child Representation Program**  
[dana.brandon@pcrpcm.org](mailto:dana.brandon@pcrpcm.org)

*Contractor with the Oregon Public Defense Commission*

# PCRP CASE MANAGER ADMINISTRATOR REPORT

## DATA COLLECTION

### ***Spotlight: Client Outcomes***

#### **Role of PCRP Case Managers in Supporting Family Stability and Reunification**

- **Stability, Support & Advocacy:**

PCRP Case Manager provided consistent support and advocacy throughout clients' involvement with ODHS. By facilitating access to substance use treatment, domestic violence services, and housing resources, client was empowered to address personal challenges and prioritize the well-being of their children. Coordination with ODHS and legal partners strengthened reunification efforts and long-term case outcomes.

- **Medical & Educational Advocacy:**

The client, whose child had significant medical needs, received targeted support from the PCRP Case Manager to access educational advocacy, medical and mental health services, and housing assistance. The client maintained sobriety, completed all court-ordered services, and successfully transitioned to independent housing. This led to reunification and case dismissal.

- **Early Case Resolution & System Navigation:**

In a case resolved prior to jurisdictional trial, the PCRP Case Manager assisted the client through conflict with ODHS and complex system processes. Through persistent communication and advocacy, extended in-home visitation was achieved. As a result, ODHS dropped the petition and dismissed the case before trial.

- **Culturally-Specific & Jurisdictional Advocacy:**

PCRP Case Manager ensured that services were appropriate, culturally relevant, and aligned with jurisdictional requirements. They worked closely with client to coordinate safety planning, court-ordered programming, and long-term strategies that addressed family stability, legal status, and administrative considerations post-case dismissal.

- **Encouraging Growth & Accountability:**

By supporting treatment and employment goals, the PCRP Case Manager reinforced accountability and personal development. Consistent check-ins and encouragement helped client engage in substance use recovery and job readiness.

Dana Brandon, MSW  
Senior PCRP Case Manager Administrator  
[DANA.BRANDON@PCRPCM.ORG](mailto:DANA.BRANDON@PCRPCM.ORG)

Shannon Getman  
PCRP Case Manager Administrator  
[SHANNON.GETMAN@PCRPCM.ORG](mailto:SHANNON.GETMAN@PCRPCM.ORG)

## View results

Respondent

70

Anonymous

13:32

Time to complete

### 1. Full Name \*

Jorge Macias

### 2. Organization/Entity Name \*

JMI

### 3. Email \*

Lpccenter@msn.com

### 4. Phone Number \*

503-408-7578

### 5. Public Comments must be directly related to agenda items for this meeting. Please specify which agenda topic your comments will relate to below. \*

Hourly compensation for private investigators

### 6. What type of public comment are you submitting? \*

☒

Written

☐

Verbal - Virtually Via Zoom

### 7. Written Public Comment

If you'd like to submit attachments, please send them to [info@opdc.state.or.us](mailto:info@opdc.state.or.us) in addition to filling out this form

I would support an increase of at least \$10 dollars more for private investigators in the State of Oregon. I believe the social function investigators provide make the difference in the lives of thousand of Oregonians who face criminal proceedings, and generally investigators do not get enough to fulfill their duties.

### 8. Additional Notes



## View results

Respondent

73

Anonymous

02:24

Time to complete

### 1. Full Name \*

Terrence Gravez

### 2. Organization/Entity Name \*

ORPS & Investigation

### 3. Email \*

oregonrivers@hotmail.com

### 4. Phone Number \*

5416060480

### 5. Public Comments must be directly related to agenda items for this meeting. Please specify which agenda topic your comments will relate to below. \*

OPDC Investigator increase

### 6. What type of public comment are you submitting? \*

☒ Written

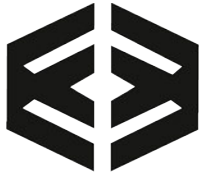
☐ Verbal - Virtually Via Zoom

### 7. Written Public Comment

If you'd like to submit attachments, please send them to [info@opdc.state.or.us](mailto:info@opdc.state.or.us) in addition to filling out this form

\$55 per hour is not enough hourly rate for many investigators to work cases. Most of us charge \$75 per hour minimum on private cases.

### 8. Additional Notes



**VISIBLE  
LAW**

JULY 14, 2025

Interim Executive Director, Kenneth Sanchagrin, [Kenneth.Sanchagrin@opdc.state.or.us](mailto:Kenneth.Sanchagrin@opdc.state.or.us)  
Deputy Director, Emese Perfecto, [Emese.Perfecto@opdc.state.or.us](mailto:Emese.Perfecto@opdc.state.or.us)  
Executive Assistant, Mona Riesterer, [Mona.Riesterer@opdc.state.or.us](mailto:Mona.Riesterer@opdc.state.or.us)  
Executive Assistant, Mara Hoaglin, [Mara.Hoaglin@opdc.state.or.us](mailto:Mara.Hoaglin@opdc.state.or.us)  
Finance Manager, Ralph Amador, [Ralph.H.Amador@opdc.state.or.us](mailto:Ralph.H.Amador@opdc.state.or.us)  
Oregon Public Defense Commission Chair, Jennifer Nash, [Jennifer.Nash@opdc.state.or.us](mailto:Jennifer.Nash@opdc.state.or.us)

## **SUPPORT FOR INVESTIGATORS BEING PAID REASONABLE HOURLY RATES**

DEAR OREGON PUBLIC DEFENSE COMMISSION:

I have been an hourly public defense provider for the past four years. During that time, working with skilled defense investigators has been critical to me providing constitutionally adequate representation to my clients.

Most of my caseload is murder cases. It is indisputable that having a skilled investigator on those cases is necessary. But over the past year, it has become increasingly difficult for me to find qualified investigators willing to work on my OPDC murder cases because the hourly investigator rate has not kept up with the times.



When I ask experienced investigators to work on an OPDC case, they frequently decline because of the low pay. Federal cases pay investigators almost double OPDC's rates, and retained cases typically pay nearly three times as much. The state's hourly rate lags behind inflation, cost of living, and standard industry rates, resulting in a dwindling number of experienced investigators willing to take OPDC cases.

When I can't find a qualified investigator, my representation of my clients suffers and becomes more costly. American Bar Association guidelines require investigation for many cases. When skilled investigators aren't available, I have to hire new or unskilled investigators. Sometimes, a lack of available investigators requires me to do my own investigation work—work that a good investigator can do at a much lower cost to the taxpayer.

It's cheaper to pay investigators to do their jobs than to pay attorneys to do investigative work. Securing the defense investigator workforce is an efficient, cost-effective way to help reduce the approximately 4,000 unrepresented defendants in our state.

It's also better to let attorneys stick to lawyering. If I can focus on the legal work while my investigators focus on investigative work, I can take more cases. Again, that division of labor helps reduce the number of unrepresented defendants in Oregon.

I strongly urge the Oregon Public Defense Commission to pay investigators the \$75/hr rate that they have been patiently seeking for over a year.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rian Peck".

RIAN PECK, OSB NO. 144012

# *Krantz Investigation*

**July 14, 2025**

Kenneth Sanchagrin, Interim Executive Director – [Kenneth.Sanchagrin@opdc.state.or.us](mailto:Kenneth.Sanchagrin@opdc.state.or.us)  
Emese Perfecto, Deputy Director – [Emese.Perfecto@opdc.state.or.us](mailto:Emese.Perfecto@opdc.state.or.us)  
Mona Riesterer, Executive Assistant – [Mona.Riesterer@opdc.state.or.us](mailto:Mona.Riesterer@opdc.state.or.us)  
Mara Hoaglin, Executive Assistant – [Mara.Hoaglin@opdc.state.or.us](mailto:Mara.Hoaglin@opdc.state.or.us)  
Ralph Amador, Finance Manager – [Ralph.H.Amador@opdc.state.or.us](mailto:Ralph.H.Amador@opdc.state.or.us)  
Jennifer Nash, Chair, Oregon Public Defense Commission – [Jennifer.Nash@opdc.state.or.us](mailto:Jennifer.Nash@opdc.state.or.us)

## **Re: It's Time to Raise the Investigator Rate to \$75/Hour**

Dear Oregon Public Defense Commission:

I am a defense investigator with **Krantz Investigations**, and I'm calling on OPDC to immediately raise the public defense investigator rate to \$75 per hour. This increase is long overdue and essential to preserving the integrity and functionality of Oregon's public defense system.

For years, investigators have been asked to do critical, time-intensive work—locating witnesses, reviewing discovery, and uncovering key facts—all at a rate that undervalues our expertise and makes it increasingly impossible to remain in this field. The state's current rate is not competitive. It has failed to keep pace with inflation, rising business expenses, and the compensation offered in federal or retained cases.

When qualified investigators can no longer afford to take OPDC cases, attorneys are forced to absorb the workload—at double or triple the hourly rate. This is not only inefficient, but also fiscally irresponsible. The solution is simple: pay investigators a fair rate to do the work we are trained to do.

Raising the rate to \$75/hour is the most cost-effective, logical step the Commission can take to stabilize the public defense system. Without investigators, the truth doesn't come to light. Cases fall apart. Justice suffers.

I stand with the Defense Investigators of Oregon and the many professionals who continue doing this work not because it's easy or profitable—but because it matters. Please act now.

Sincerely,

**Dawn Krantz-Watts**  
Krantz Investigations

**July 14, 2025**

To:

Interim Executive Director, Kenneth Sanchagrin, [Kenneth.Sanchagrin@opdc.state.or.us](mailto:Kenneth.Sanchagrin@opdc.state.or.us)  
Deputy Director, Emese Perfecto, [Emese.Perfecto@opdc.state.or.us](mailto:Emese.Perfecto@opdc.state.or.us)  
Executive Assistant, Mona Riesterer, [Mona.Riesterer@opdc.state.or.us](mailto:Mona.Riesterer@opdc.state.or.us)  
Executive Assistant, Mara Hoaglin, [Mara.Hoaglin@opdc.state.or.us](mailto:Mara.Hoaglin@opdc.state.or.us)  
Finance Manager, Ralph Amador, [Ralph.H.Amador@opdc.state.or.us](mailto:Ralph.H.Amador@opdc.state.or.us)  
Oregon Public Defense Commission Chair, Jennifer Nash, [Jennifer.Nash@opdc.state.or.us](mailto:Jennifer.Nash@opdc.state.or.us)

*Re: In Support of \$75/hr for Investigators*

Dear Oregon Public Defense Commission:

My name is Katie Marchant, and I have been a defense attorney for about nine years. I started out in private practice at Janet Hoffman and Associates. I left her firm about 18 months ago to start my own practice. One of the reasons I left was because I wanted to take court-appointed cases, which I do on an hourly basis. In both public and private practice, working with skilled defense investigators has been essential to my success. More often than not successful resolutions have been the result of adept investigative work. On a multi-victim sex abuse case, for example, the prosecution dismissed measure 11 charges related to one alleged victim because the investigator managed to find exculpatory witnesses. Those counts would not have been dismissed but for that work – work that I have neither the training nor the aptitude to replicate on my own.

However, it has become increasingly difficult to find qualified investigators willing to work on OPDC cases because the hourly investigator rate has not kept up with the times. When I ask experienced investigators to work on an OPDC case, they frequently decline because of the low pay. Federal cases pay investigators almost double OPDC's rates, and retained cases typically pay three times as much. The state's hourly rate lags behind inflation, cost of living, and standard industry rates, resulting in a dwindling number of experienced investigators willing to take OPDC cases.

When I can't find a qualified investigator, my representation of a defendant suffers. Indeed, I have purposefully kept a low state-case load because I cannot provide constitutionally adequate assistance without one.

American Bar Association guidelines require investigation for many cases. Sometimes, a lack of available investigators requires me to do my own investigation work – work that I am not trained for and that a good investigator can do at a much lower cost to the taxpayer.

It's cheaper to pay investigators to do their jobs than to pay attorneys to do investigative work. Securing the defense investigator workforce is an efficient, cost-effective way to help reduce the approximately 4,000 unrepresented defendants in our state.

I strongly urge the Oregon Public Defense Commission to pay investigators the \$75/hr rate that they are demanding. If you would like any additional information, I would be happy to provide it. You can reach me at [katie@marchantlawllc.com](mailto:katie@marchantlawllc.com) or 615-585-7603.

Best,

Katie Marchant  
Bar Number 161147

**From:** [James Von Hippel](#)  
**To:** [Info](#)  
**Cc:** [Stacey Lowe](#)  
**Subject:** Input from a Provider for consideration at 6/12 meeting  
**Date:** Wednesday, June 11, 2025 4:07:09 PM

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You don't often get email from [jvonhippel@swopds.org](mailto:jvonhippel@swopds.org). [Learn why this is important](#)

Dear Commission Members:

I hope all is well!

I am an attorney with Southwestern Oregon Public Defender Services, Inc., and I have been practicing law for more than 35 years, 19 of which have been at the above-mentioned public defenders' office.

I tried to submit my written testimony, but the website with the prescribed form said it was no longer accepting responses. I apologize that I did not try to submit my responses earlier. Thus, please consider this my written input/testimony. Better late than never.

While offering more money to private attorneys to get them to represent heretofore unrepresented defendants is a good idea, other ideas should be considered as well. For instance, we can and should consider statewide fixes as well as county-by-county ideas.

Regarding the statewide issues, I think reducing some misdemeanors to violations would help. I recall that there was a proposed bill this legislative session to do just that, and it was shot down. This body (OPDC) should use its influence to persuade the legislature to reconsider (or consider) reducing certain misdemeanors to violations.

To the extent that some counties have more unrepresented defendants, we should compare the practices in those counties to the practices in counties that don't have as many unrepresented defendants. For example, in Coos County, the lack of diversion-type and/or treatment programs, the lack of restoration/alternative (to jail) sentences, the attitudes of the prosecutors towards those programs, and some of the Court's own policies are large impediments to resolving cases and, frankly, may (and do) discourage out-of-county attorneys from taking Coos County cases. One specific example is the Court's policy of not allowing negotiations after a trial has been set, even if the parties reach a resolution prior to trial but after the trial date was set.

To reach a solution to the problem, even if it is a temporary solution, all parties- judges, prosecutors, and the Legislature- must make sacrifices. The proposed solutions should not just focus on the current public defenders. Public defenders, as with other attorneys, have an ethical obligation to the Court and to our client, to provide competent counsel. That obligation does not change regardless of how much we're being paid. The caps (or MAC) are, I understand, calculated based on the caseload an attorney can ethically handle to provide competent representation. Any proposed solution should not be based on increasing the recommended maximum caseload for court-appointed work.

What we really need are more attorneys willing to take court-appointed criminal defense cases, but, until that happens, please consider the above ideas.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide input.

James von Hippel

## OPDC June 12<sup>th</sup> Commission Meeting – Provider Feedback Session Written Submissions – **Supplemental**

Name	Organization/ Entity Name	Written Feedback Submitted
<p>Eric Morrell</p> <p><i>Provider Feedback Received in Q&amp;A Section – Confirmation to Include in Feedback Session received past posting date</i></p>	<p>Eric M. Morrell, Ph.D/Behavioral-Physiology Clinic</p>	<p>Per your question # 2 barriers: Douglas County Jail has implemented a policy in which certified forensic evaluators cannot conduct evaluations without either the attorney or the attorney's investigator present. This subtly undermines the right to due process, as fewer referrals will be made if the attorney knows s/he has to be present and/or make arrangements for the investigator to be present. I have mentioned this to at least 3 Douglas County defense attorneys - all seemingly concerned, but none doing anything about that. Your intercession would be helpful.</p> <p>Per Question #3 court receptivity to misdemeanor downgrade - I anticipate that the courts in many counties would approve of court option to drop misdemeanors to violations in petty cases, because court would see reduced backlog. As a forensic evaluator I find it distressing that so much money is wasted on some of these petty cases (even though I stand to profit, I still am concerned). I've done many cases involving less than \$1000 in theft that translate to several thousand dollars for me, let alone all the other expenses involved. That seems simply misguided.</p> <p>Thank you for your time. Your work is greatly appreciated.</p>
<p>Richard Garbutt</p> <p><i>Questions received for Q&amp;A session – topics outside of Commission purview</i></p>	<p>Richard Garbutt Investigations</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Is there any discussion of having a pretrial professional be a place holder for unrepresented defendants to be tasked with maintaining contact with the defendant prior to appointment of counsel, beyond the court release officer responsibilities? BTW I have developed a model approach if this is something that has merit as a stop gap measure until a final solution is developed?</li> <li>2. Has any thought been given to establishing a "nurse practitioner" equivalent for legally trained professionals to fill the void for minor criminal cases?</li> </ol>