

Jessica Gomez Urges State to Take Immediate Action to Avoid Public Defender “Crisis”

More Stress for Oregon’s Criminal Justice System

MEDFORD, OR, UNITED STATES, April 29, 2022 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Oregon high-tech business Founder and Republican candidate for Governor Jessica Gomez today called on the State to act immediately to address serious short-falls in the system to provide Public Defenders for defendants who cannot afford representation. It has recently come to light that the State has been failing to provide competitive compensation for



Jessica Gomez for Governor

the Constitutionally-required attorneys, and has placed unneeded and burdensome limitations on their work outside their role as Public Defenders. Gomez expressed concern that the State’s failures will lead to the violation of defendant’s civil rights, and may even result in the dismissing of charges against potentially dangerous defendants due to lack of legal representation.

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“This is yet another crisis that has manifested due to Oregon’s political leadership’s failure to prioritize the day-to-day operations of the State,” noted Gomez. “Oregon is failing to uphold its Constitutional responsibility to indigent defendants by inadequately compensating Public Defenders to the point where fewer are willing to serve. This is placing our State’s entire criminal justice system at

risk.”

Oregon Supreme Court’s Chief Justice Martha Walter recently took the extraordinary step of reaching out to members of the Oregon Bar Association to plead with them to take up the Public Defender roles that have been left largely unfilled due to the State’s negligence. Her letter noted, “This is a very basic and fundamental right that Oregon is struggling to accommodate.”

In addition to low reimbursements, the State wants to limit the amount of non-Public Defender work lawyers who sign up for the program can accept, making their participation even less affordable. Also, the State is now requiring that those who sign up provide extensive disclosure on any "private" work they take, raising concerns about attorney-client privilege.

"Unemployment insurance, housing assistance, drug treatment, and now this crisis. It is clear Oregon needs leadership that takes the day-to-day operations of the State seriously", Gomez concluded. "This year Oregonians have a chance to bring new leadership to State government. Let's hope the voters choose wisely."

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