

Martha L. Walters  
Chief Justice



## OREGON SUPREME COURT

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January 25, 2022  
**(SENT BY EMAIL)**

Members of the Oregon State Bar

Dear Bar Members:

I am reaching out to you today to request your help in representing those who are accused of a crime and cannot afford counsel. This is a very basic and fundamental right that Oregon is struggling to accommodate. While there are many reasons for the situation we face, some of which can be fixed with time, one of the significant challenges at this moment is COVID and its repercussions, including a current lack of attorney resources.

Many of you have public defense backgrounds but have since turned your attention to other civil and criminal case work. Many of you are talented in the courtroom but don't have a chance to take a case to trial on a regular basis. [Here](#) is a link to the standards required for attorneys to provide public defense services in criminal cases. If you have previously been qualified by the Office of Public Defense Services (OPDS) to handle any type of criminal case, you are likely already in OPDS' system and do NOT need to complete a new qualification form. Please simply reach out to Billy Strehlow at OPDS directly at [Billy.J.Strehlow@opds.state.or.us](mailto:Billy.J.Strehlow@opds.state.or.us) or 503-910-5049. If you have not previously been qualified by OPDS to handle criminal cases but have the necessary experience, please use the link to complete the form and send it to Mr. Strehlow at the above email and OPDS will work quickly to expedite you through the process. You can help on a pro bono basis, or reach out to discuss compensation rates.

If you do not have the experience necessary to be qualified by OPDS, but are willing to work under the supervision of another qualified lawyer, please stay tuned. We are trying to determine the best way to use the talents of those of you who may not qualify to provide unsupervised representation, but who have skills and abilities that could be of real assistance. In the very near future, I will be making a more specific request and providing direction about how you can participate.

I understand that I am asking a lot, particularly during a pandemic. But I cannot overstate the need. As a judicial system and as members of the legal profession, we must ensure that peoples' fundamental constitutional rights to counsel are met, and we desperately need every available lawyer to be part of the solution.

Please consider the services you are willing to offer and reach out to OPDS. I have been assured that OPDS stands ready to assess your qualifications, certify you for the correct case type, and put you to work. If you have other ideas about how best to address the current lack of attorney resources or about how you can be of help, please let me know by writing me at

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[OJDInfo@ojd.state.or.us](mailto:OJDInfo@ojd.state.or.us). You have been great partners in the effort to keep our courts both open and safe and, working together, I know that we can meet this challenge.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Martha Walters". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "M".

Martha L. Walters  
Chief Justice

MLW:jm/22eMLW003jm