



Dear Co-chairs Steiner Hayward and Rayfield and members of the committee,

Thank you, for the opportunity to provide testimony on the DHS budget for Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities. My name is Eva Rippeteau and I am a political coordinator for Oregon AFSCME Council 75. Oregon AFSCME represents employees in several counties with case management services for people receiving Intellectual /Developmental Disabilities services, I/DD group home employees and employees of the Stabilization and Crisis Unit, all whose work is funded or impacted significantly by this portion of DHS's budget.

Cuts to DHS programs will hurt the people served as well as the people providing the services. Like many of our state's health and human services programs, cuts to one program might show an immediate cost savings in that area, but those costs will show up in other areas. Cuts to case management and placement services at the county and regional levels will mean that individuals seeking services and supports will have to wait longer to receive those or placements into homes. This could result in more demand on more costly crisis supports such as the Stabilization and Crisis Unit or in inappropriate places such as jails or the Oregon State Hospital. AFSCME Local 88 member, Linda K Lund highlights this in her testimony.

Not included in Linda's testimony is the concern over reducing the current payment to counties at the 95% of the workload model to 91%. The workload assessment was conducted and implemented before we implemented the K-plan. Since the implementation of the K-plan, case management is far more comprehensive in providing services leaving payments to counties based on the workload model obsolete and incomplete. County developmental disability services' budgets are based on the number of contacts that the agency has with enrolled and eligible clients. When a client is in crisis or in need of more supports and services, they require more time in case management. This reduces the contacts with others needing services and then the budget of the program. Reducing this to 91% will cause further issues in budgeting and the intersection with Regional services that step in to help cover those with higher needs so that counties can continue to support others in need. If the regional supports are reduced along with the county workload, people will have to wait longer for much needed services and support.

In the group home settings, the people receiving services need support staff who know them and their needs. This means that we need a stable workforce, where currently there is an incredibly high turnover rate. Low wages for this difficult work is certainly a large part of why people leave. However, another component is the lack of a comprehensive training and support system for the employees. AFSCME members in our private non-profit homes as well as those in the Stabilization and Crisis Unit believe that raising the wages of all support workers and creating an accountability and training system



that can be accessed by the entire workforce would have tremendous benefits for the people that they support.

Across the board, SACU and private group homes, our members have asked that increased trainings should not be online based, but in person and comprehensive for providing individual supports, hands on training for direct care and based in state where there can be appropriate oversight and responsiveness to the needs of the workforce and people receiving supports. We have a system for similar to this for our child care and early learning workforce called the Oregon Registry Online housed at Portland State University.

AFSCME represented private group home Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) have a pay range of \$10.50-\$15.14/hour. This is a combined pay scale. Our Stabilization and Crisis Unit members who work in the position equivalent to DSPs are paid \$15.50-\$21.83/hour. The people in the SACU program have no other housing options. SACU cannot "evict" a person for any reason. Private homes have this option. And while private homes do provide supports for some in crisis, because the need for the services outweighs what is available, those at SACU, with the exception of the few remaining from Fairview have significant needs and are in crisis. They are there to be stabilized and moved back into a community placement. Our members in SACU agree that their sisters and brothers, represented or not, deserve at least a starting wage of \$15/ hour. However, consideration for the level of supports provided by SACU should be considered and their wages should be higher. Providing wages that keep people in the work long-term will have long-term benefits for the clients receiving the supports. When you have a trained staff that knows how to properly support individuals, those individuals are more likely to thrive and not slip into crisis.

Additionally, I have provided a document from Nathan Kennedy, president of AFSCME Local 1246, SACU on a program called Therap that could be purchased by the state and used by non-profit group home and case managers across the state to track training and abuse and neglect reports of employees, even when they change employers as well as ISPs for clients, even if they switch homes, or case managers.

Of course, AFSCME knows that not making the cuts and investing in our I/DD workforce will take significant revenue. However, raising revenue will absolutely help protect our most vulnerable people in Oregon in I/DD and other services in DHS, OHA and beyond.

Thank you, again for your time and work on this and so many other critical budget issues.