



June 21, 2017

Co-Chair Steiner Hayward  
Co-Chair Rayfield  
Subcommittee on Human Services  
900 Court St. - State Capitol  
Salem, OR 97301

Co-Chair Steiner Hayward, Co-Chair Rayfield, and members of the Committee:

My name is Stacy Cowan and I am with SEIU Local 503. SEIU Local 503 is the union of nearly 65,000 Oregonians doing more than 500 different jobs in 85 state, local government and non-profit agencies and care facilities. We represent the frontline workers at Child Welfare in DHS.

I've had the opportunity to testify for this committee on the significant understaffing at DHS Child Welfare, including the increasing problems with recruiting and retaining workers. We have seen a similar problem grow over the years with recruiting and retaining a diverse set of high quality placements for children in the foster system.

The impact of inadequate staffing can be felt throughout the entire system, including in the support, or lack of support felt for foster families. We truly believe that short staffing is at the heart of many of the issues foster families face in partnering with DHS Child Welfare.

We have to address staffing, but we believe legislation like HB 2170 is also an important piece of the puzzle. Foster parents need to have an independent voice in the system.

Additionally, if we really want to improve recruitment and retention in foster care placements, we have to look at providing adequate rates for foster families, providing occasional respite care, and providing free child care to foster families.

Lastly, we are happy to support any legislation that empowers foster youth. They need to have an independent voice in the system as well.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

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