

March 5, 2019

The Honorable Jackie Winters, Co-Chair  
The Honorable Carla Piluso, Co-Chair  
Members of the Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Public Safety  
900 Court Street  
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Co-Chairs and Members of the Committee:

I am an Oregon Youth Authority volunteer at MaClaren Correctional Facility and have been a volunteer for over a year. I'm writing to ask you to fund the Oregon Youth Authority (OYA) at its current service level and to consider additional investments that would help it mitigate risks in key areas. During my time at OYA I have had the opportunity to meet many excellent staff and a number of youth who are proactively seeking out structure and support to help them live meaningful lives. As an ordained clergyperson my faith tells me to care for those who are imprisoned and to watch out especially for children. Volunteering at MaClaren is an expression of both of those teachings for me. But that place and many other facilities in the OYA need state funding so that we all can, in a sense, live out these values that Christians share with many others of good will.

Maintaining and even increasing OYA's budget will allow it to continue its nationally-recognized work to adopt the developmental approach, use data to improve youth outcomes, and to reduce the use of isolation while maintaining staff and youth safety. Funding OYA at current service level will help the agency continue these transformational efforts to promote safer communities for all Oregonians.

I also urge you to help OYA complete its three-biennium effort to align its budget with its services —which can be accomplished within OYA's current service level funding. Having a transparent and accurate budget is good stewardship and it allows Oregonians to better understand the needs and risks within OYA's budget. Please support the completion of this plan.

Additional investments can also help the agency address risks in key areas. As you know, Oregon's Juvenile Justice Information System (JJIS) — one of only three statewide juvenile justice databases in the nation — needs to be modernized to ensure it remains useful. Adding staff in strategic roles such as mental health, skill development, culturally-responsive services for underserved youth, foster care, and staff recruitment could do a lot to help the agency mitigate identified risks to its initiatives and to the youth it serves. Just as important would be positions bolstering key agency oversight functions in its Professional Standards Office and internal audit.

I urge you to do all you can to support the wonderful work that OYA is doing with Oregon's youth and continue the momentum it has developed.

Respectfully,



Rev. Dr. Benjamin L. Hartley  
Newberg, Oregon resident