



March 26, 2019

Co-Chair Nosse, Co-Chair Beyer, and members of the committee, for the record my name is Kyndall Mason. I am a political and policy strategist for SEIU Local 503. I am submitting this testimony on behalf of our 65,000 members and many of the people they provide supports and services to, through OHA. We represent people on many sides of the services provided at OHA, from staff at the agency, to care providers in various Medicaid funded settings.

Representing workers in nursing homes and various other settings means that we come in contact with the realities of public health on a nearly daily basis. OHA needs to be properly funded to simply provide oversight and education around things like disease prevention. Without the programs and outreach from public health programs, our workers would not be safe.

SEIU Local 503 asks that you support HB 5525, in order to fund programs that are critical to the health and safety of some of Oregon's most vulnerable people. We ask that you not stop there. Current service levels are barely enough to keep our head above water as a state. Without public health modernization propping up the work already being done we'd be in a much worse place, health wise. However, we need more technology, strategic workforce development and far reaching education programs, or Oregon runs the risk of being the victim of an epidemic.

When agencies, like OHA, are fully funded and given the opportunity to educate the public in addition to having the resources to actually enforce policy, we see healthier communities. Kids have a chance at a better education when they are not suffering from preventable disease. Employers experience more productivity and less turnover, when workers can access health care and are educated around disease prevention and treatment. Elders can live longer more independent lives.

Thank you for your time on this matter.

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