

The Oregon Youth Authority has some questions about HB 2487 as it relates to our staff, in particular the overall policy need relating to our staff. The inclusion of youth correction officer in the public safety personnel and public safety officer definition often proves to be problematic and confusing. HB 2487 represents a bill this session that uses that definition and it is unclear if this is a matter of definitional use or policy need. Of the professions included within the definition of public safety officer/personnel, youth correction officers are the only ones that are engaged with youth, and this is limited to a small subset, only those whose primary duty is supervision of youth in a youth correction facility.

Another area of question for us is that HB 2487 removes the language that is consistent with other areas of records law, "when the public interest requires disclosure of the information." Similarly, the personnel disciplinary action exemption in the current ORS 192.345 applies only unless "the public interest requires disclosure." This balance test is used in many areas and allows a mechanism for release of records and guides agencies when records can be released as the public interest requires disclosure. In addition, should an agency deny release, there is a mechanism to appeal the decision for review. Our areas of inquiry on this, are to understand the different implications for staff within a workplace and applying varying standards of release as well as removing public interest, which therefore infers greater access for personal or private interests not related to the public awareness and transparency.

We look forward to engaging further in discussion on the evolution of this bill.