



February 28, 2021

Dear Chair Prozanski, Vice-Chair Thatcher and Members of the Committee,

As mentioned in my testimony from Oregon AFSCME Council 75 in support of SB 397, we represent a growing number of members who work in behavioral health services. In that testimony I shared that we know the importance of streamlining the process and reducing the costs of expungement would greatly improve opportunities for many including people working in behavioral health - a field that is in need of rapid workforce development and growth.

One member that would be helped is Briana Garcia, a Peer Wellness Specialist, represented by AFSCME Local 1790-4 Cascadia Behavioral Health. Here is her story:

“I am writing to share my support of SB 397 as it would allow more opportunities for education and licensure to improve my career and to better support my family. At the age of 18, receiving a felony conviction rocked my world. It inevitably led to unrewarding minimum wage jobs because people didn't want to hire me, housing instability because people didn't want to rent to me, and other rights that have been jeopardized due to being a person with a felony. I remember feeling so stuck and wanting to give up. It's no wonder to me why recidivism rates are so high for people struggling with reestablishing home and community. After saving money for several years I spoke with an attorney about expunging my record and was told that I have to come to terms with the fact that I'll always have to deal with this conviction; for the rest of my life. Eventually I found a profession as a traditional healthcare worker where my lived experience is valued. So, I've decided to honor that by using my lived experience to uplift and advocate for those who have been marginalized. It has created a passion and drive in me to see these systems of oppression change because I believe that there is too much proof of



recovery for the stigma to perpetuate, and will continue holding onto the hope that change is possible.”

-Briana Garcia, Peer Wellness Specialist, Local 1790

I am sure that as we are able to get the word out about this bill, we will be hearing from others. You will also likely hear from Briana directly as she is excited to know that this work is being done and to join in the work.

Thank you, for your continued work on this and many other criminal and racial justice issues.

Respectfully,

Eva Rippeteau
Political Coordinator
AFSCME Council 75
erippeteau@oregonafscme.org