



Service Employees International Union Local 503

72,000 public services workers, care providers, and non-profit employees in Oregon.

To: House Committee on Human Services

On: March 1, 2021

Re: House Bill 2340, Support

Dear Chair Williams, Vice-Chairs Leif and Ruiz, members of the committee,

My name is Courtney Graham, and I am submitting this testimony on behalf of SEIU Local 503 in support of House Bill 2340. SEIU represents more than 72,000 people statewide, including over 22,000 public sector workers. This includes many of the hardworking people at the Oregon Department of Human Services, Child Welfare.

Oregon's Independent Living Program (ILP) allows youth access to a coach to help them navigate the next phase of their lives as they exit the foster care system and attempt to manage the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 to their lives. SEIU members at Child Welfare routinely refer youth they work with for ILP services, including support for housing and employment search resources like job training. They see the ILP as a critical program that teens rely on, and it should continue to be funded and even expanded to meet the needs of youth in foster care.

Every young person deserves the opportunity to learn the skills necessary to successfully transition into adulthood. Reaching milestones such as graduating from high school, renting a first apartment, finding employment and applying to college require long-term relationships and support. Unfortunately, youth experiencing foster care often lack these resources. The current COVID-19 crisis is highlighting this disparity. Without emergency stabilization funds, Oregon youth may lose access to the very people they are turning to for support today.

We urge your support for House Bill 2340.