

Submitter: CJ Alicandro

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Business and Labor

Measure: HB4126

Dear Chair Holvey and members of the House Committee on Business and Labor,

My name is CJ Alicandro, I am a member of AFSCME Local 1790 which represents the employees of Cascadia Behavioral Healthcare. I am a Crisis Intake Coordinator working with Project Respond's Emergency Department Team. I spend most days completing intake assessments for people at high risk of utilizing emergency services.

Thank you for this opportunity to share with you why I believe HB 4126 is so important.

When I started at my agency 6 years ago, there were already efforts underway to unionize. Unfortunately, there were steps taken to prevent this from occurring. I remember entering into a monthly meeting where we were surprised by visitor who was there to simply "share facts" while discussing ways in which unions were bad for workers (the typical stories about oppressive union bosses, needless complication, disrupting the work "family," etc.)

Enduring union-busting tactics certainly did not inspire my colleagues to commit to an agency that demonstrated hostility towards their efforts to unionize. What are you supposed to do with an organization that resists organizing? Some coworkers left to find other jobs and some of us stuck it out hoping we could affect change. I am just thankful that those of us in my department did not have to deal with the union-busting tactics which were reported from some other parts of the agency. Hopefully, some colleagues will be able to share these stories in their testimonies.

With major sustained efforts from colleagues, we eventually did manage to build our union several years ago. We now have guaranteed pay scale increases for the first time ever and I am happy to report many of us finally have living wages! Personally speaking, it has inspired me to stick with the company longer than I may have otherwise. Wages, of course, are just the beginning. Having colleagues who can feel safer and more secure in their jobs translates to better services for the people we serve. Workers can't perform at their best when they're dealing with the stress of an unstable workplace.

I grateful for the ongoing investments and discussions for improving Behavioral Health and Substance Use Services and Treatment. Passing HB 4126 will ensure that employees in this sector have a voice in their workplaces and increased capacity

to provide the quality services our communities need.

Sincerely,
CJ Alicandro
Local 1790