



To: House Committee on Early Childhood and Human Services

From: Anthony Castaneda, SEIU Local 503

Date: February 8, 2023

RE: HB 2578 Testimony

Hello Chair Reynolds, Vice Chairs Scharf and Nguyen,

For the record, my name is Anthony Castaneda, I am here today testifying in support of House Bill 2578 on behalf of SEIU Local 503, which represents over 72,000 workers statewide, including nearly 10,000 workers at the Oregon Department of Human Services, including screeners at both the Oregon Child Abuse Hotline and Aging and People with Disabilities.

House Bill 2578 simply asks that the Oregon Department of Human Services, through rule, create a mandatory training for mandatory reporters to ensure that they are equipped to handle this serious responsibility, and asks that mandatory reporters renew that training once every four years, to account for the very likely possibility of changing standards or best practices.

There are currently resources for mandatory reporters on ODHS's website, but evidence suggests these are critically under-utilized. There is, for example, a 27-minute training video available on the ODHS website. Looking at the video's viewing metrics, it has been watched a little over 32,000 times. When we consider that mandatory reporters include medical practitioners, teachers, emergency responders, attorneys, all ODHS staff, and more, it becomes quickly apparent that

not every mandatory reporter has seen the training. Moreover, it is possible that the employees have received no training at all.

ODHS is the agency with the most overtime, with more than 60,000 hours per month, according to data from 2021. The majority of these hours are accrued by workers in Child Welfare and Developmental Disabilities. In conversations with screeners, one key issue that has been highlighted is managing calls and subsequent reporting from mandatory reporters who are reporting things that do not meet the standard for abuse.

These calls result in an increase in administrative work, which many screeners typically save until the end of their shift in order to ensure more time on the phones. That means, when there is a high volume of superfluous calls, there are longer wait times, more documentation, and a greater chance that details relating to an actual abuse case may slip through the cracks.

Today you will also hear from an ODHS screener about how calls from untrained or under-trained mandatory reporters impacts the day-to-day workings at ODHS, but I did want to take this moment note that better, more thorough training for mandatory reporters will improve safety for vulnerable populations in Oregon, and also increase efficiency at an agency where staff are already being asked to work long hours addressing emotionally fraught issues.

One final note: we are currently having conversations about an amendment to exempt professionals licensed by a health licensing board, as this training is already part of their certification process.

Thank you, and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Anthony Castaneda, Political and Policy Strategist

SEIU Local 503