



To: Chairs Campos and Valderrama, Members of the Human Services Sub Committee of Ways & Means

From: Anthony Castaneda, SEIU Local 503

Date: Wednesday, February 15, 2023

RE: SEIU Local 503 supports HB 5026

My name is Anthony Castaneda, and I am writing on behalf of **SEIU Local 503 in support of HB 5026** to maintain current services levels at Oregon Department of Human Services (ODHS), specifically the Child Welfare department, and make additional investments to improve services. SEIU Local 503, which represents over 72,000 workers statewide, including nearly 10,000 workers at ODHS.

The Governor's Recommended Budget supports staffing capacity and enhances services in a number of areas: eligibility work related to state services, Child Welfare services and support systems, foster care/resource parent rates, and emergency response staffing capacity. The budget maintains funding for core Child Welfare services while leveraging investments to improve the quality of care and services for children and families.

Moreover, the budget adds General Fund investments to accomplish three goals for the agency:

1. Boost the workforce, which includes hiring Child Protective Services caseworkers and support staff, to address caseload and workload challenges.
2. Recruit and retain foster parent/resource family providers to ensure timely placement of children.
3. Provide support services delivered by the DOJ for legal representation related to Child Welfare cases.

The combination of the investments outlined in the Governor's Recommended Budget in the Child Welfare system will ensure that Oregon is delivering the highest quality of care to children and families. Investments in system improvements, employee training, and recruitment will reduce the current unsustainable caseloads for workers, resulting in better services for children and youth in the Child Welfare system.

Lastly, I ask the Chairs and members of this committee to maintain the current service level for the entire ODHS Child Welfare department and to increase support for foster families which is outlined in the \$17M increase detailed in the recommended budget.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Anthony Castaneda