

Submitter: Lori Sullivan

On Behalf
Of:

Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On Public
Safety

Measure: SB5541

Hello,

My name is Lori Sullivan. This is my 30th year working at Belloni Boys Ranch in Coos Bay, OR. When I started OYA was a new agency, splitting from Child Protective Services to better meet the unique needs of adjudicated youth. I have seen it grow from a grass roots organization to what we see now. While I am not at all a fan of bureaucracy and the layers of legislated requirements and expectations piled on over the years I can honestly say that this program that has served the youth of Oregon for nearly sixty years would be closed, like many other programs, if it were not for the extra mile OYA has gone to support us. In particular we were the recipient of some grant funding from OYA for critical water and sewer systems repairs, one right after the other, that without other funding could have shut our doors.

While I personally feel the requirement for special certification for sex offender treatment providers was unnecessary legislation I accept it as the standard now.

What you as the lawmakers need to accept is that now it has to be paid for. It's already a field that doesn't draw a lot of interest from those entering the field for a lot of valid reasons. If you are working with these involuntary clients it can be frustrating, disappointing and vicariously traumatizing. Not a lot of people are drawn to the work and those that can basically charge a premium. We have not been able to recruit or pay for an in house SO therapist. So we contract out at the programs expense. We are able to make it work with the SOT subsidy from OYA which covers about half of the actual cost. Without the subsidy it would not be feasible to continue helping these youth and by extension those who have been harmed.

While I understand and halfheartedly support the BRS expectation of higher educational credentials for youth care professionals that also comes with a cost.

With the current dismal hiring pool on the southern Oregon coast it's hard enough to find just good people with common sense that care about youth. Now add in the expectation of credentials. We have to be able to pay a competitive wage. In order to do that OYA has to be funded at a level that allows reasonable increases in daily rates. We can stretch our budget to cover some things, cut back on some things but when it comes to staffing the program it just comes down to more money.

If you are concerned about community safety and genuinely care about the rehabilitation (or habilitation) of adjudicated youth please support funding OYA at a level that can get the work done. Thank you for the opportunity to be part of the conversation. L. Sullivan