



To: Members of the Ways and Means Public Safety Sub-Committee

From: Anthony Castaneda, SEIU Local 503

Date: February 23, 2023

RE: **Support for HB 5541 OYA Budget**

Dear Co-Chair Sollman, Co-Chair Evans and members of the committee,

My name is Anthony Castaneda, and I am testifying on behalf of SEIU Local 503 members in **support of HB 5541** relating to the Oregon Youth Authority (OYA) 2023-2025 budget. SEIU Local 503 represents over 72,000 workers across the State of Oregon and hundreds of dedicated employees in OYA.

At OYA, our members provide small, safe, and accommodating environments for youth 24/7/365. Across the 36 counties in Oregon, our members receive and process roughly 7,000 criminal and non-criminal referrals. OYA uses data-informed and evidence-based practices to provide accountability and treatment and is focused on addressing racial disparities.

The Governor's budget provides funding to maintain the current service levels and investments in three areas: small and safe living units at OYA facilities, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, and resources for youth and dedicated staff. The budget will allow the agency to stabilize the workforce and reduce staff-youth ratios, which could lead to better outcomes for youth who enter the system. Considering the racial disparities in the juvenile racial system, the investment will provide the funding needed to hire additional staff across departments to provide responsive services. Lastly, the budget will invest in the recruitment of behavioral health specialists and victim rights advocates.

This is the time to maintain service levels and commit to program and staff investments because potential cuts could undermine the progress made in the last decade. The agency's success is evident in the fact that other states are looking to OYA for successful models for juvenile justice.

In closing, I ask the Committee to support HB 5541 to ensure that OYA capitalizes on the progress made in the recent decade to ensure that our youth receive the necessary support and training as they transition to adulthood. I believe OYA is a sound investment in safe communities and in our youth who have the capacity for growth and change.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Anthony Castaneda,

