



To: Senate Committee on Healthcare

From: Scott Bigelow, union leader, SEIU 503

Date: 1/30/25

Re: SEIU 503 supports SB 813

Dear Chair Patterson, Vice Chair Hayden, and members of the committee,

My name is Scott Bigelow, and I'm writing on behalf of SEIU 503 in support of the passage of Senate Bill 813. The bill is a technical fix to add the Oregon Youth Authority (OYA) and county juvenile department staff to a list of public safety workers who come into contact with bodily fluids of another person. The bill would allow OYA staff, like me and my colleagues, to ask the court to compel the source person to be tested for certain communicable diseases if they do not voluntarily agree to do so.

SEIU 503 represents over 700 dedicated public employees at OYA, from Behavioral Health Specialists to Group Life Coordinators (GLC) to Youth Corrections Coordinators to Institution Registered Nurses. Among many roles at OYA, these roles often work directly with youth in both group and 1-1 settings, whether for activities or medical purposes. For example, Group Life Coordinators II & III provide independent care and guidance to youth offenders or at-risk youth through day-to-day activities. GLC's are also tasked with observing youth to prevent escapes/walkaways or assaults. This means that workers are tasked with intervening when an altercation breaks out between youth or when there is an assault on staff. These incidents can expose workers to bodily fluids intentionally or unintentionally.

OYA and county juvenile staff, like other public safety workers included in current ORS from 2017 law change, are at risk of exposure to bodily fluids. Staff work closely with youth in numerous situations that could lead to exposure, such as: supporting youth who are ill or injured, responding to medical emergencies, responding to altercations, or staffing youth engaged in physical activity.

OYA also needs the resources to ensure that there are office staff to support affected staff with the filing process. Due to heavy workloads, the process for keeping staff and youth safe from harm during exposure can be arduous. Dedicated staff to file the paperwork and move the process will ensure that all staff can return to work quickly and youth activities can resume.

SB 813 is a critical step in the right direction to ensure that OYA has the tools to mitigate and minimize risk of exposure to illnesses and diseases. Please support the bill.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Scott Bigelow, union leader, Local 415-OYA chief steward