



To: Joint Subcommittee on Transportation and Economic Development

From: Anthony Castaneda, SEIU 503

Date: 2/12/25

RE: HB 5007 Oregon Employment Department Budget

Dear Co-chair Gomberg, Co-chair Woods and members of the committee,

My name is Anthony Castaneda, and I am writing on behalf of SEIU 503 in support of the agency budget, including POPs 102, 103, 105 and 106, for the Oregon Employment Department and to encourage the committee to work with the agency to retain skilled state workers due to the winding down of the Trade Act program that was not renewed by Congress.

SEIU 503 represents over 72,000 dedicated public workers who work hard to ensure that Oregonians are receiving the services that they need. At the Oregon Employment Department, SEIU 503 represents over 1,600 employees across divisions and programs all around the state.

The Governor's budget provides resources for the department to operationalize the new unemployment insurance (UI) and Paid Leave Oregon technology system, continue efforts to modernize the department's core employment services, and increase staff to improve customer service delivery. With those goals, SEIU 503 supports POP 102, 103, 105 and 106 to grant the agency additional position authority and make appropriate shifts to reduce workloads and fairly compensate staff for skills.

In addition to the budget requests and POPs, I ask the committee to strategize with the agency to retain trained and skilled workers impacted by the expiration of the Trade Act. Those in the program have years of experience, indispensable institutional knowledge, established relationships with key employers, and know all the general ins and outs of technical programs/processes. There are over 80 positions impacted by the shutting down of the Trade Act program.

For example, Business Employment Specialists help applicants find work, log employers' job openings, and refer job seekers to employers, workshops and trainings. Specialists also process unemployment-insurance claims by reviewing applications for eligibility and obtaining missing information to assist claimants in filing for benefits. For many recently unemployed workers, this support could mean the difference between paying the rent or mortgage on time or taking a major financial hit, potentially a negative mark on a person's credit. This upfront investment in job support could be a contributing factor to the lower unemployment exhaustion rates. Our members supported nearly 75,000 job seekers and worked with over 7,000 employers.

Employees at OED work around the clock to ensure that Oregon families are supported during perhaps one of the toughest times in their lives. We owe it to workers, and we owe it to working Oregonians to ensure that the agency has the resources needed to respond to the needs of households at a time of crisis.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Anthony Castaneda