



To: Ways and Means Subcommittee on Human Services

From: Anthony Castaneda, SEIU 503

Date: February 19, 2025

RE: Oregon State Hospital 2025-2027 Budget

Dear Co-chair Campos, Co-chair Valderrama, and members of the committee,

My name is Anthony Castaneda, I am writing today on behalf of SEIU 503 to ensure that the Oregon State Hospital (OSH) is adequately funded and staffed to provide high quality patient care.

SEIU 503 represents over 72,000 dedicated public employees across agencies all around the state. At OSH, we represent over 1,900 employees in over 80 classifications across the three campuses in Pendleton, Junction City, and Salem. The roles range from dental hygienists to energy technicians and electricians to chaplains to licensed practical nurses to mental health technicians. Our people are critical to the mission of the hospital to ensure that patients are cared for during, perhaps, the most difficult times in their lives.

We support the Governor's Recommended Budget to maintain staffing levels, to hire additional personnel, such as 130 Mental Health Technicians, and update security systems and protocols to keep staff and patients safe. We also suggest that the legislature look closely at supporting training and development programs at OSH to ensure that all workers are prepared to respond to emergencies as they arise.

In supporting testimony, you will read about the work of Randy Davis, who has dedicated over 30 years of his career to OSH. Randy Davis started as a Mental Health Technician and now trains staff across divisions in de-escalation strategies and hands-on safety practices. In another testimony, you will read about the work of Shawn Holliday who works as a Facility Energy Technician at the Junction City campus.

Work at Oregonian's psychiatric and forensics hospital is uniquely challenging compared to other industries. Over the years, the patient population has changed as presented by the agency, and patients exhibit higher levels of acuity. Patients experiencing acute mental health and behavioral issues, particularly when staffing is not adequate, can be violent toward staff and other patients, resulting in physical injuries. The challenges are compounded when the hospital is understaffed.

As a result of chronic understaffing, OSH workers clock the most overtime of any workplace in the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) – more than 219,000 hours in 2021. By investing in additional staff, the agency could reduce the cost of overtime and allow staff to take time off with the appropriate level of coverage.

Despite these challenges, our members in facilities, dental hygiene, nursing care, and other units continue to show up for their patients and continue to perform their jobs to the best of their ability. Please support the Governor's Recommended Budget and adequately fund the Oregon State Hospital to address the staffing challenges.

Thank you for your time,

Anthony Castaneda