



February 19, 2025

For the record, my name is David Lynch and I am Mental Health Registered Nurse at the Oregon State Hospital where we provide treatment focused on hope, safety and recovery. I have been working at the Oregon State Hospital for 13 years and a half years. And have been the union president for the RN's and Nurse practitioners for the past 8.

Over the past few years, Oregon AFSCME members have increasingly sounded the alarm about escalating dangers in their workplaces. We are exposed to chronic understaffing, alarming gaps in safety protocols, inadequate training, and insufficient support after incidents—and we demand change. Patients at the Oregon State Hospital (OSH) deserve a care setting that provides hope, healing and recovery. But for too many years, understaffing and lack of recognition of the changing population at OSH has put both patients and workers at risk.

Oregon's chronic lack of community treatment has created a terrible situation where people often cannot get care without being arrested. This leaves OSH as the "bed of last resort," after people's mental illness has gone untreated and unaddressed for years. Meanwhile, court orders are forcing early releases of patients before their treatment is completed. State officials are starting to take action after spending nearly \$2 million on an outside consultant. In January, OSH announced a new Psychiatric Intensive Care Unit (PICU) to provide the appropriate level of treatment to patients experiencing acute episodes and are engaging in aggressive behaviors. AFSCME members at OSH will support the new model in hopes that it improves patient care and recovery and reduces risk for workers. Members will also look to hold hospital leadership accountable to fully implement the plan.

Oregon AFSCME Local 3295 supports the Governor's Recommended Budget / Oregon Health Authority requests that will increase safety and care for patients and reduce risk



for workers. The request includes 136 mental health positions to reduce overtime for LPNs and RNs, increased forensic evaluation service positions, electronic monitoring of patient vital signs for enhanced care, increased security screening at OSH, and community navigators to help patients get the appropriate level of care when they leave OSH.

I'm excited and hopeful that we will be provided the necessary resources to make these positive changes and improve the lives of both the patients and staff at the Oregon State Hospital.

Thank you for your time, and we urge you to support this budget.