



**Joint Committee on Ways and Means
Subcommittee on Human Services**

3/4/25

Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 5020

Co-Chairs Campos and Valderrama, and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 5020, the budget for the Long-Term Care Ombudsman (LTCO) Program. My name is Rachel Hansen, Political Strategist at SEIU Local 503. We strongly support the critical work of the Ombudsman, which plays an indispensable role in protecting the rights and well-being of Oregon's most vulnerable individuals. SEIU 503 represents caregivers across the spectrum of long-term support services, including independent providers in the Homecare Program, CNAs in nursing facilities, DSPs in group homes, and adult foster home owners. Our members are deeply committed to the individuals they care for, and we know firsthand the value of the Ombudsman. It ensures that residents in long-term care facilities receive dignity, respect, and quality care, free from abuse and neglect, while empowering them to make choices about their own care.

The work of the Long-Term Care Ombudsman program has demonstrated its significant value to Oregonians in just the last year alone. Their oversight and engagement following the tragic death at Mt. Hood Senior Living has resulted in policy recommendations currently under consideration this session that will materially improve the lives of Oregonians served by our long-term care system. That work deserves continued if not increased support – especially as our population continues to age.

The Residential Facilities Ombuds (RFO) program has been a lifeline for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) and mental health needs. However, despite significant growth in the number of I/DD and mental health homes served, staffing levels have remained stagnant since the program's inception. This bill's funding is crucial to addressing these challenges and meeting the growing demand for services. We also appreciate the proposed conversion of five public guardian program positions from limited duration to permanent status. These positions, initially created to address hospital discharge challenges, provide critical support to patients who lack decision-making assistance and face significant mental health or human service needs. Making these positions permanent will ensure stability and continuity for this vital work.

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While the Governor's Recommended Budget (GRB) maintains the LTCO program at current service levels, we urge the committee to consider the increasing demands on the program and the need for additional resources to fully support Oregon's aging population and individuals with disabilities. In conclusion, we urge your support for Senate Bill 5020, which represents a meaningful investment in the LTCO program and its ability to serve Oregon's most vulnerable residents.

Thank you for your consideration.

In unity,

Rachel Hansen
Political Strategist, SEIU Local 503