

Submitter: Jennifer Cranmer

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On Human Services

Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB5526

Hello, Co Chair's and members of the committee,

My name is Jennifer Cranmer, I am an employee of Oregon Department of Human Services, and have served for over 13 years. During my career, I have served across Child Welfare, Self-Sufficiency Programs, and Oregon Eligibility Partnership, primarily in public-facing roles. Additionally, I am a member of SEIU 503 and am the Vice President for ODHS L200 and a steward.

I am here to speak in favor of SB 5526 POP 109 Personnel Safety, as I have seen, experienced and supported my peers and members of the public in times when the safety of our staff and other Oregonians were in jeopardy.

You have seen the data about the increase of safety incidents over the last 5 years, 450%. Its staggering, and we probably won't see a decrease of incidents in the years to come, because we can't control other people's behavior.

Safety is the workplace has a wide range of meanings within our work: powdery substances our staff receive in the mail, traffic in our lobbies- including members of the public brining in weapons, illicit substances and having conflict with one another, our staff have had monitors and unstable plexiglass knocked on them and are subject to verbal aggression and threats, our staff are exposed daily to bed bugs, lice, scabies and other contagions when working in the field and in our offices, our state cars have been unreliable and failed us when operating them- putting other people traveling our Oregon roads in jeopardy. Our buildings are failing us, to point we are evacuating, displacing staff and causes chaos to those who need to receive our services.

Investing in this, POP 109, will help provide some evaluation and prevention work that is needed to get a head of some these building issues. In addition to funding cameras, better lighting, fencing and other safety items that our employees have been asking for, to feel more safe in the workplace.

The postvention and follow up with staff who just experiencing an incident helping them through any needed paperwork or providing information and just overall checking in, makes people feel seen and supported after an incident.

We are experiencing higher level encounters with the public that we are prepared for or that one can even fathom. Recently, we had an employee passing through a lobby, as they were walking a member of the public put my co-worker in a headlock and hit them in the head repeatedly. Staff around witnessed this as well as the Oregonians in the lobby waiting to receive our services. Our staff had to carry on with work like nothing happened and the people waiting in the lobby had to assess their own safety and decide if this was a safe environment for them to continue to be in. Our staff love their jobs, they love helping and supporting the people in our

communities, but it is important for you all to see and understand that our work is dangerous, and we deserve to be invested in.

Investing in qualified, trained, uniformed behavioral health skills professionals, in partnership with ODHS facilities, Health Safety and Employee Wellbeing and the Trauma Aware program, will aid in lessening the severity of the in-person incidents we experience and the after effect on both staff and the public.

Safety in the ODHS & OHA workplace is not only safety for the employees of these agencies, but also the fellow Oregonians receiving our services, investment in workplace safety cannot wait any longer.

Thank you,

~Jennifer Cranmer