



To: Joint Subcommittee on Public Safety

From: Anthony Castaneda, SEIU 503

Date: March 27, 2025

RE: SEIU 503 Supports HB 5041 OYA

Dear Co-chairs Broadman and Evans and members of the committee,

My name is Anthony Castaneda, and I am writing on behalf of SEIU 503 in strong support of the Oregon Youth Authority's (OYA) budget to maintain manageable staff ratios and sustain current service levels for youth in the state's custody. Our union supports the Governor's Recommended Budget (GRB) and the investments in increasing staffing levels as a retention strategy, improving facility conditions, and modernizing the agency's outdated systems.

More specifically, I would like to voice support for 5 additional group life coordinators at the MacLaren Youth Correctional Facility, POP 550 for Medicaid waiver support, POP 551 for a housing and reentry coordinator, POP 103 for interpretation services, POP 301 for JJIS (jajjiz) modernization, and POP 302 for updated CCTV systems.

At OYA, SEIU 503 represents over 700 employees across 50 position classifications. For example, we represent Group Life Coordinators (I & II) who oversee daily living activities. Coordinators perform various duties such as conducting searches of youth or living areas for unauthorized articles like weapons or drugs. Coordinators also work with youth to build life skills such as guiding youth and teaching survival skills on wilderness trips or conservation projects. Additional staff will relieve current staffing challenges. We often hear about the missed recital, basketball game, date, and many other special life events. Other roles include Behavioral Health Specialist, Social Services Specialists, Institution Registered Nurses, and many more.

The frontline staff go above and beyond to support youth and the mission of the agency. I would like to take a moment to highlight one example. In July of 2024, wildfires broke out in Eastern Oregon, perhaps, the largest wildfire in Oregon's history. At the time, the decision was made to move youth from Eastern Oregon YCF to MacLaren and Rogue Valley. The agency leadership and staff acted quickly to ensure that youth were out of harms way and erred on the side of safety. Staff from Eastern Oregon YCF volunteered to cover shifts for

the youth in the host facilities – even while many of them have homes, livestock and loved ones in danger.

In summary, our members are dedicated to OYA's mission to ensure that youth are ready to re-enter society and be productive adults after they have served their sentence. I ask this committee to improve current staffing ratios, maintain services levels, and make the necessary investments to secure our facilities and keep our systems up to date.

Thank you for you time and consideration,

Anthony Castaneda