



Service Employees International Union, Local 503, OPEU

The Executive Board of Oregon Youth Authority Local 415, SEIU Local 503, has worked hard over the last several years to improve the Oregon Youth Authority and help turn it into the agency that it has evolved into today. This was hardly a solo act, it took hard work on the part of both the management team and the union and we have been proud to work with them to right the ship. It is for those reasons that we are in support of the Oregon Youth Authority's proposed budget and urge the Legislature to give this agency the funding it needs to continue to serving the youth in its custody.

It is no secret that this agency took large cuts in this last budget cycle. These cuts hit our front line workers, and thus the youth they treat and protect on a daily basis the hardest. OYA workers, like many of our brothers and sisters in state government, are being asked to do more with less and this is creating safety and security problems for both staff and youth. Furthermore, this is happening with a dramatic shift in the population at the facilities. Nearly half of the population within the facilities are Department of Corrections Youth Offenders and the numbers of youth offenders who have gang affiliation are rising as well. This has created new safety and security challenges for staff and the need for more staffing and training is imperative. At four of our regional facilities we do not even have the proper staffing to respond to assaults in a timely fashion. Our workers and this agency need the funding to keep both staff and youth safe and provide treatment that can have a real impact on public safety.

We also see a need for youth to receive more vocational training opportunities than they have now. Our workers know that a youth who has the skills to go into the work force upon their release are far less likely to reoffend. Programs like MacLaren's garden, Hillcrest Bike repair program, and others have been a huge success, but the fact is we need more of them so the youth have a shot at a productive life upon release. These programs give the youth a chance to grow and become more than a lifer in the system. Our frontline workers want to see their treatment pay off, and their duty to public safety is one of the highest callings of the work they do, however, to effectively do that they need the tools and funding to do the job. Vocational training for youth is essential to that job and to the successful reformation of the youth.

As a union we are prepared to partner with management as they implement the Youth Reformation System (YRS). Although, we have question around its implementation and what it will mean for staff and youth alike, we know that our working relationship with agency leadership will help make this implementation a smoother process and hopefully the end result will mean a better OYA for the youth and public.

However, as stated above our top priority is the safety and security of both youth and frontline workers and we are dedicated to making sure that issue continues to be addressed through training and proper staffing. We know that if we as an agency have the funding to complete our mission that we can continue improve the services our agency provides the youth and the public.

Sincerely,

Dan Ferguson
OYA Local 415 President

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