

Co-chairs Bates and Nathanson and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on the DHS budget. My name is Matt Orser and I am the president of AFSCME Local 1246. Our local represents 558 employees at the Stabilization and Crisis Unit.

Over the last couple of years, my union brothers and sisters have come before several committees testifying about the increased violence and incidences of injury at the SACU homes. We last came to the legislature in September to ask for funding to create an emergency response team to help houses when elevated behaviors and violence occur in a house. Truth of the matter is we need more than the emergency response teams.

Since last July, there have been 148 staff injuries. This data is tracked by policy year July through June and to give you an idea of how scary 148 staff injuries in 7 months is, in the policy year July 2013-June 2014, there were a total of 213 staff injuries. So, we've gone from an average of just under 18 injuries per month to 21 injuries per month. If this trend continues, SACU staff will essentially have a 50/50 chance of receiving an injury at work.

Over the last 13 months, SACU employees have worked an average of 12,000 hours of overtime each month. Staff are being mandated overtime and are sometimes working 16 hours a day several days a week. When we are tired, it is harder to properly care for our clients.

Something needs to be done. The clients of the Stabilization and Crisis Unit aren't the same as the former Fairview clients. We are afraid that if we do not get the staffing and worker protections that AFSCME is working on, the injuries will continue to get worse. Please work with us and properly fund and staff the Stabilization and Crisis Unit.

Thank you, for your time. I welcome any questions.