



Service Employees International Union, Local 503, OPEU

To: Members of the Ways and Means Subcommittee on Public Safety – February 9, 2015

We are writing on behalf of the Oregon Youth Authority Local 415 – of SEIU Local 503 to voice our support for maintaining funding levels proposed in the Governors’ Budget for the Oregon Youth Authority in the 15-17 biennium, as well as full funding of the OYA 10-year Strategic Plan for Facilities. SEIU represents direct care and support staff within OYA facilities, as well as professional staff within OYA’s Central Office. We urge you to adopt a budget for OYA that meets the funding levels proposed in the Governor’s budget and funds Phase One of the 10-year plan.

As the agency’s labor partners, SEIU members are proud to be participants in the process of changes and are supportive of the direction around the key agency initiatives, the Youth Reformation System and Positive Human Development that you will hear about in the Ways and Means process. We believe funding the 10-year plan will allow OYA to achieve its mission of accountability and reformation.

Our members are particularly interested in the 10-year plan. OYA's existing physical structures are aging and in need of significant repair and maintenance. The 10-year Strategic Plan for Facilities makes cost-effective use of the state's funding resources by combining Hillcrest and MacLaren youth correctional facilities at MacLaren. We are supportive of it because it is designed to create safer environments for youth and staff by renovating MacLaren and meeting some deferred maintenance needs at all facilities. To be sure, the closure of Hillcrest, called for in the 10-year plan after significant improvements are completed at MacLaren, is not what many of our members want. But we understand that it may not be economically feasible to upgrade and maintain all ten of OYA’s close custody facilities.

The work called for in the 10-year plan will also better support the ability of staff to effectively work with youth by providing appropriate spaces for treatment, educational, recreational and vocational needs. The plan also would respect the rights of existing employees by following the union agreements for relocating staff. Significantly, the plan creates a glide path for OYA to reduce the density of youth housed in individual living units and if supported by the legislature would allow the agency to maintain current staffing levels and enhance the staff to youth ratio, allowing our members to be more effective in the direct care work they perform for the state of Oregon. This is something our members have wanted for a long time and we see the 10-year plan as a way to achieve that.

Overall, the plan maintains the appropriate balance between safety, security, and treatment, and it is fiscally prudent. We urge you to support and fund this important initiative and maintain OYA’s operational funding levels for 15-17.

Sincerely,

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