



Oregon AFSCME Council 75 Corrections



78TH OREGON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

JOINT WAYS AND MEANS SUBCOMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY

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Public testimony for SB 5504 – the 2015-2017 biennial Agency budget for the Department of Corrections.

Madam and Mister Co-Chairs and honorable members of the committee,

My name is Tim Woolery; I work for Oregon AFSCME Council 75 as a Staff Representative. It is my pleasure to testify before you today. In addition to working for Council 75 for almost 10 years, I was also honored to previously be employed with the Oregon Department of Corrections for approximately 18 years. Among our other public safety units, Oregon AFSCME Council 75 is the exclusive representative for approximately 1,800 ODOC employees in the AFSCME Security bargaining unit and about 1,200 ODOC employees in various other classifications in our AFSCME Security Plus bargaining unit. As you have heard this week, these represented employees in these units perform the challenging work that keeps the citizens of Oregon safe by providing services and security supervision for almost 15,000 convicted felons in facilities spread throughout the state.

Frequently tours of the work sites and in other communications with the elected leaders and with the 3,000 or more represented employees – who directly provide the vital services of that agency – provide me with a good perspective on the diversified work that they perform as well as the concerns that they occasionally have. Before getting to a few things that I wanted to share with you today, I would like to take a few moments to commend as well as echo Director Colette Peters' comments during her testimony this week before this committee. I am specifically referring to her honest and positive comments and appreciation for the dedication, professionalism and the hard work of the men and women of all classifications within this Agency. I also believe to their credit that, over the previous decade that Oregon has suffered in obtaining adequate revenue for essential services, the Agency has been good and frugal stewards of their budget.

Public safety is one of several core functions of government. The represented public safety employees in ODOC are nothing short of heroic for many things not the least of which is their fortitude and resolve to come to work each day one of the most potentially violent and negative environments imaginable. It takes a moment to fully consider the ramifications of their chosen professions. They are unique in directly and continuously work in the midst of and far outnumbered by convicted felons. **An important point that I must make is that the inherent danger and the correspondingly the value of the services that employees of the Department of Corrections provide are unchanged in good economic times or bad.** However you all would recognize that you were significantly challenged to make the best of a series of bad or difficult budgetary decisions that directly impacted this and other Agencies. Revenue is thankfully improving so now is the time to replace and restore adequate funding.

Some of you have already toured one or more ODOC facilities and have seen firsthand some of the challenges facing these employees who faithfully perform the vital services that keep the rest of society safe 24 hours / 365 days a year. This takes a tremendous toll on the employees and their families with extremely high levels of PTSD, other stress related illnesses and medical conditions with things such as hypervigilance or mandatory overtime contributing to a lack of adequate sleep. AFSCME has been a strong advocate and partner with the Agency and our fellow labor organization AOCE in supporting and initiating ground breaking research and two studies by PSU and OHSU of some of the mental and health effects this profession has on our members. Wellness has finally become a higher priority that we hope seeps deeply from top to bottom and all throughout the organization and guides decision making.

During your review of this Agency judicious attention needs to be in repairing systemic system deficiencies that have developed over many years of cut after cut both specified and unspecified. Over the last decade employees have had to do much more with less. Positions were not filled or were held vacant for savings resulting in individuals being overwhelmed and overworked. Inmate populations steadily increased but without any increase in security or other correctional professional staffing. You have heard testimony this week that almost 1,000 emergency beds of inmates have been crammed in beyond institutional design capacities and what we feel staffing levels would securely allow often in areas where safety of employees and inmates alike are in jeopardy. The Post Relief Factor is antiquated and does not take into account the amount of legitimate needs for Vacation, Training, Military Leave, FMLA/OFLA, Injured at Work, Sick Leave and other reasons that a specific employee is unable to man a specific and necessary post. Bottom line, the safety of your communities and the 14 mini-cities (prisons) require investment of additional staffing and updating increase to the Post Factor. Employees need the ability to attend their weddings or their children's milestone events let alone be provided much needed respite of a decent vacation from this unhealthy environment.

Oregon AFSCME Council 75 has requested several member leaders to share their perspective and concerns with you today. I would like to introduce the following employees of the Oregon Department of Corrections:

Ryan Jordan – Local President and Correctional Officer working for ODOC in the Transport Unit. Ryan will provide his perspective and concerns regarding some of the challenges working in his unit and staffing.

Jeff Coffman – Local President and Correctional Officer at Eastern Oregon Correctional Institution in Pendleton. Jeff will provide testimony regarding some of our concerns dealing with inmate assaults, emergency beds and staffing.

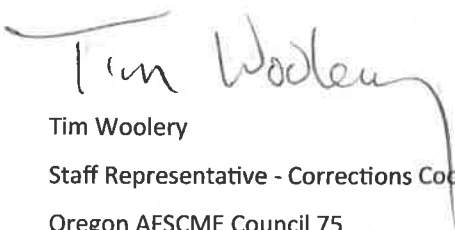
Matt Ballard – Local Vice President and Correctional Officer at Columbia River Correctional Institution in Portland. Matt will be testifying regarding his perspective on Inmate Work Crews and staffing.

Greg Clouser – Local President at Two Rivers Correctional Institution at Umatilla. Greg will be testifying about some of our concerns regarding of Emergency Beds being added and inmate overcrowding in areas not designed for it all without a corresponding increase in staffing creating increased tension and risk to inmates and staff.

Frank Lewis— Local Executive Board and Correctional Officer at Santiam Correctional Institution in Salem. Frank will be testifying on facility architecture, poor line of sight or visibility, Emergency Beds/Overcrowding and staffing.

I commit to you the members of this committee and the 78th Oregon Legislature that the Local Leaderships of the two AFSCME bargaining units of employees of the Oregon Department of Corrections and myself are engaged and willing to work with the Oregon Department of Corrections Administration and do what is necessary to promote public safety by holding offenders accountable for their actions and reducing the risk of future criminal behavior but we need your help restoring funding to this Agency and increasing staffing to ensure success.

Respectfully submitted on March 19th, 2015,



Tim Woolery

Staff Representative - Corrections Coordinator

Oregon AFSCME Council 75