



Chair Gelser and members of the committee,

Thank you, for the opportunity to testify in support of SB 226 with the proposed amendments.

My name is Eva Rippeteau and I am a political coordinator for Oregon AFSCME Council 75.

AFSCME represents around 550 employees of the DHS Stabilization and Crisis Unit. Over the last several years the members of Local 1246 have come to the legislature asking for additional staffing and for help to address needs associated with the changing acuity of the clients they serve. We appreciate the work and attention that the issue is now receiving.

The requested amendments for SB 226 will create Crisis Outreach Assessment Teams and a task force to look at other solutions for improving safety at the DHS operated Stabilization and Crisis Unit Homes. Over the last few years, the clients that are coming to the SACU homes have a higher acuity and have more difficult behaviors. They don't respond to the traditional behavior supports and more occurrences of elevated behaviors are happening. Our members that do the work are fearful that as more of the higher acuity clients come into the SACU homes, there will be more incidents of injury or worse.

AFSCME Local 1246 members brought the idea of crisis response teams to the emergency board, last fall. We are supportive of the proposal DHS has brought forward and Chair Gelser included in her proposed amendments. Having response teams to help cover when there are staff shortages, or respond when elevated behaviors have occurred is one of the ways we see helping move SACU to be more successful.

In version 5 of DHS's Stabilization and Crisis Unit Proposal for Crisis Outreach Assessment Teams from February, they describe the changing population perfectly. The document states, "The changing face of our population includes individuals who are street savvy, well versed in client rights, complex involvements with other agencies (law enforcement, corrections, and



mental health) and most noticeably have a presenting mental health issue that impacts their daily life along with their developmental disability.”

We are hopeful that the task force will be able to bring back solutions that will keep all clients and staff safe as we learn to support this “changing face” of the SACU client. We are very appreciative of the addition of SACU direct care staff and representatives. They know first-hand what they need to improve the success of SACU and moving their clients to community settings.

AFSCME urges your support of SB 226 and the proposed amendments.

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