

Testimony in support of 909

Respectfully Submitted by Joe Baessler, Political Director Oregon AFSCME

Chair Gelser, members of the committee, my name is Joe Baessler and I work for Oregon AFSCME and we represent 24,000 workers across the state of workers. We support SB 909. Our members strongly believe that we need to protect vulnerable populations from abuse and that it is important that those that have abused those populations are not allowed to work with vulnerable populations. However we do believe that in certain cases there are situations where the black and white description of how a person is convicted of a crime that would preclude them from their chosen profession should be examined before a unilateral determination is made. We have had a small number of members that have been affected because of how the law is now and we believe that in almost every situation the current serves Oregon well but there are situation where there is a need to take a deeper look at one worker and what the story behind their convictions is.

We have had members that have made plea deals to avoid jail time or to avoid a painful time in their lives. They were young and made these decisions without thinking about the consequences later in their life. If they had known that decision would keep them from their chosen professional taking care of vulnerable populations they might have fought the charges. We have members should committed their offenses decades ago and are completely different people now. We do not believe these convictions should haunt them forever. These are rare case but we believe it is necessary to have a way for them to tell their story and allow them to make the case for their reform. Right now there is no avenue or appeal for these workers. We believe that in these rare cases these few workers should have a voice, even if they are still ruled to be ineligible. Thank you for your time and please support SB 909.