

Testimony in Support of -2 amendments to HB 2255

Chair Hoyle and Members of the Committee, My name is Joe Baessler and I work for Oregon AFSCME. We represent over 24,000 workers in the State of Oregon and about a third of those members work for the State of Oregon. We along with other allies worked very hard to help establish the 11:1 staff to manager ratio in State agencies and we still support the ratio. We believe that setting a ratio is the best way to ensure that agency hiring is in the best interest of the public. However we understand that the law needs to be re-examined and that we should make good decisions about staffing ratio and take into account the work that is done by the agency. Agencies are diverse and perform very different functions and it is important to think about going forward.

We support HB 2255 with the dash 2 amendments with the understanding that this is an attempt to make the law work better. We know that in some agencies the ratio does not work and we know that in some agencies certain departments are unfairly burdened with not enough managers while other departments within the same agency can keep a large number of managers. We appreciate that the Department of Administrative Services reached out to our union to work on these issues. We want the law to work and support this “pause button” in order to achieve this. We would not support rolling back the progress that was made. We would also not support making it easier to decrease the number of frontline workers and diminishing the services to the public. DAS has made it clear that is not the intent and they will be working to improve the law.

Many agencies have made major strides and this progress should not be lost. In many cases the 11:1 ratio makes sense and that an even more aggressive ratio might be in order. We strongly believe that it is important to have the most efficient delivery of services to the public and save taxpayer money. HB 2255 -2 allows a review of the law without letting the ratio that is currently in place to deteriorate. It also established a detailed report on how the law is working now and those reports will be given to the workers in those agencies and department to get input from front line workers. Finally the bill with the dash 2 amendments would create a taskforce with management and labor and experts to discuss the impact and improvement of the law before the start of the 2017 Session. We support the dash 2 amendments of HB 2255.

Submitted by Joe Baessler, Political Director Oregon AFSCME