

The Honorable Jackie Winters, Co-Chair
The Honorable Duane Stark, Co-Chair
Members of the Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Public Safety
900 Court Street
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Co-Chairs and members of the Committee:

This letter is in support of SB 5042, the Oregon Youth Authority (OYA) budget and bond funding for the continuation of OYA's 10-Year Strategic Facilities Plan. OYA protects the public by holding youth accountable and providing a safe environment for evidenced-based treatment services, education and reformation.

I have been a resident of Oregon since 1979, and the city of Portland since 1981. Since 2015, I have been one of two private citizens serving on OYA's five member Audit Committee, and currently have the privilege of serving as Chair of the Committee. The Audit Committee primarily serves to insure that OYA's adopted policies and procedures are adhered to, and that budgeted resources are managed properly. But more importantly, that is preparing the youth within its jurisdiction for a meaningful reintroduction back into society.

Since my involvement with OYA, I have witnessed their leadership implement and develop the Youth Reformation System. At its core, this developmental approach will benefit the state by producing more productive youth, which in turn should lower crime rate, creating a healthy environment for all of our citizens. As I've toured many of OYA's facilities throughout the state, I've had the opportunity to meet with senior staff, and more importantly, have had many conversations with the youth in those facilities. Overall, I've witnessed enthusiastic staff, and youth eager to transform their lives and have the opportunity to be productive members of our community.

This current budget cycle is a difficult one, with many tough decisions to be made. While cuts are inevitable, I want to applaud you for your proposed budget that provides OYA with funding to make the pilot Young Women's Transition Program permanent, to pay for specialized facilities staff who help prevent and reduce the use of isolation, and also for your support of OYA's 10-Year Plan for Facilities. However, the potential closure of North Coast Youth Correctional Facility and the elimination of 160 OYA community residential beds, will not only be devastating to a community, both socially and economically, but more importantly, could potentially derail the progress these youth are making towards positively reintegrating back into our community. If youth are our future, what are we saying if this decision becomes a reality?

In closing, I urge you to maintain the funding levels for OYA, and partner with us, as we strive to transform our youth and create a safe and productive environment for all citizens of Oregon.

Sincerely,

James M. Taylor
Chair-OYA Audit Committee
38 year resident of the State of Oregon