

Testimony in Support of HB 2105

Chair Barker and members of the House Judiciary Committee Oregon AFSMCE requested HB 2105 because the most common concern coming from our membership in the Department of Corrections is insufficient staffing. Our members believe that the poor level of staffing leads to an overuse of overtime, denial of vacation and missed work due to illness and injury. Poor Staffing levels leads to an inability for corrections staff to have down time and that is one of the major contributors to the poor health outcomes for corrections officers. We believe that efforts around wellness programs were an attempt to tackle these issues but they are by themselves insufficient and we need to address the underlying problem which we believe is a budget problem. We are not simply asking for more funds but more oversight and transparency to tackle these issues and make sure the current funds within the Department of Corrections maximize the staff so that we can control the use of overtime the lack of vacation and fundamentally the poor health outcomes for corrections officers.

The Department of Corrections has recognized the concerns about staff health and we believe they are trying things to reduce the problem. We support them in that work asking more corrections employees to participate in the Health Engagement Model (HEM) under the Public Employee Benefits Board.(PEBB) However there is still a significant number of employees that are not using the model. The job itself also carries a great deal of stress which contributes to the poor health outcomes. We know that Corrections officers have higher rates of obesity, alcoholism and insomnia than the general public. We believe the only real way to tackle these problems is to make sure that Corrections workers have access to time off out of the facilities. Not only do we need to reduce the amount of overtime but we also need to make sure they are allowed to take a proper vacation. This problem has been festering for years and we know the department hopes to fix it. We support their effort in developing a long term plan on reducing overtime but we believe it is important to start today trying to fix the problem. The Department's efforts could only be bolstered but having more stakeholders at the table to work on these issues from a budget perspective.

AFSCME strongly believes that the over use of overtime is one of the key symptoms of the staffing issues that are in the Department of Corrections. The prisons are twenty-four hour facilities and must be staffed at all times for the safety of the inmates, workers and the public. The amount of shifts needed for this staffing should be fairly consistent. Overtime is an inefficient way to staff our prison. It cost most and adds to the stress of corrections workers. Our members are not opposed to overtime and use regularly however much of the overtime we work is out of our control. We believe that between 35% and 40% of this overtime is mandatory. We must estimate because it is not tracked in a usable way by the Department of Corrections. We also believe that in many situations corrections workers are asked to stay so that another worker will not be forced to take mandatory overtime. We do not believe that

stepping up for fellow workers is totally voluntary. How the Department uses overtime it varies a wide degree based on which institution you are looking at. Some of the large institution used tens of thousands of hours in the 2016 calendar year while some of the small facilities only used a few thousand. We believe that some of this is no doubt due to the complexity of staffing a large institution. However, there are still several facilities that are far out of line with the rest of the prison system. The below chart shows the use of overtime during the 2016 calendar year and our estimate of how much of that overtime was mandatory. We are spending millions on overtime above base rate and the Governor and legislature need to have a better understanding of how this decision is being made and ask the question might we save money by hiring more staff.

2016 Overtime and Estimated Mandatory Overtime in Oregon Department of Corrections by institution.				
Institution	Total Overtime Hours	Total Overtime Dollar Amount	Estimated Mandatory Overtime Hours	Estimated Mandatory Overtime Dollar Amount
CCCF	69,306	\$ 2,903,284	27,722	\$ 1,161,314
CRCI	7,701	\$ 320,618	3,080	\$ 128,247
DRCI	9,438	\$ 372,954	3,775	\$ 149,181
EOCI	36,274	\$ 1,413,387	14,510	\$ 565,355
MCCF	5,205	\$ 208,643	2,082	\$ 83,457
OSCI	19,676	\$ 864,651	7,870	\$ 345,861
OSP	52,893	\$ 2,242,598	21,157	\$ 897,039
SCCI	3,334	\$ 127,521	1,334	\$ 51,008
SCI	3,092	\$ 130,140	1,237	\$ 52,056
SFFC	3,252	\$ 106,142	1,301	\$ 42,457
SRCI	42,465	\$ 1,790,758	16,986	\$ 716,303
TRCI	59,151	\$ 2,402,866	23,661	\$ 961,147
WCCF	3,969	\$ 149,816	1,588	\$ 59,926
Total	315,756	\$ 13,033,378	126,302	\$ 5,213,351

Source: Oregon Department of Corrections (Mandatory Overtime estimated at 40% of total Overtime by AFSCME Research)

Normally our answer to these issues would be to ask for more funds for the Department of Corrections and hope that it is spent in a way that would elevate the staffing problems that we are facing. However, this is a tough budget year and we have also been unsuccessful with that strategy year after year. We believe the solution has to be one of more oversight and transparency before we can ask for more money to fix the problem. We know that often the Department of Corrections is asked to make unspecified cuts to their budget in tough fiscal years. We have heard time and time again that “DOC finds the money” in cut years and therefore they don’t need more funds for staffing. We know that several facilities have been using emergency beds for years now. That was a short term budget decision in a bad economic year. There are many questions that our membership has about why decisions are made. We

believe the only way to truly begin to deal with the staffing and health issue is to have a deeper dive into the budget of the Department of Corrections and begin to discuss how they are making decisions with more stakeholders in a longer more thought process. We believe HB 2105 sets up that process and that is why we urge your support.

Respectfully Submitted by Joe Baessler, Political director Oregon AFSCME