



Service Employees International Union, Local 503, OPEU

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

February 22, 2017

Dear Co-Chairs and members of the Committee:

Please find this letter in support of HB 5042, the Oregon Youth Authority (OYA) 2017-19 budget and bond funding for the continuation of OYA’s 10-Year Strategic Facilities Plan.

SEIU Local 415 represents some 750 or so employees who work at Oregon Youth Authority facilities throughout the state as a critical part of the Juvenile Justice System. We believe in our mission to make our communities safe and Oregon’s youth crime free and productive. OYA protects the public by holding youth accountable and providing a safe environment for evidence-based treatment services, education, and reformation.

Over the last budget cycle, OYA has re-deployed its existing funding to help implement the Youth Reformation System (YRS). The model uses data in Oregon’s unique Juvenile Justice Information System (JJIS) to assist youth to return to society ready to take part in a productive, healthy, crime-free life, which reduces victimization and taxpayer expense. As the OYA staff involved in this effort, we recognize the commitment that this has meant. Interrupting this important effort will be a set-back, with the potential to throw away the valuable progress that has already been made.

As the agency’s labor partners, SEIU members are proud to be participants in OYA’s positive, comprehensive culture change, and we support the key agency initiatives of the Youth Reformation System and Positive Human Development (PHD). PHD is Oregon’s strength-based developmental model of Juvenile Justice, a nationally recognized best practice. Under the PHD approach, high expectations and accountability flow from safe, secure, caring, and supportive relationships.

Maintaining funding levels for OYA will help the agency continue these transformational efforts to the benefit of the youth they serve and the safety of the public.

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Finally, pursuant to legislative direction in the 2013 session, OYA began implementation of its 10 year strategic plan that is consolidating and updating facilities that serve Oregon's youth who are most at risk. These projects bring the agency's physical environments in line with researched best practices that deliver positive outcomes for youth and public safety. Two years ago we came before you to support the Facilities Strategic Plan and testified at that time:

"The work called for in the 10-year plan will also better support the ability of staff to effectively work with youth by providing appropriate spaces for treatment, educational, recreational and vocational needs. The plan also would respect the rights of existing employees by following the union agreements for relocating staff. Significantly, the plan creates a glide path for OYA to reduce the density of youth housed in individual living units and if supported by the legislature would allow the agency to maintain current staffing levels and enhance the staff to youth ratio, allowing our members to be more effective in the direct care work they perform for the state of Oregon. This is something our members have wanted for a long time and we see the 10-year plan as a way to achieve that."

Now that the 10-year plan has commenced, SEIU urges you do everything you can to help continue OYA's momentum. It is imperative that you maintain the OYA budget for public safety and reformation, and allow OYA to continue to protect the public through meaningful impacts on education, prevention, and economic development for Oregon.

We recognize these are tough times that require difficult decisions, but you can count on SEIU to be supportive of your processes to raise the revenue needed to not only support Oregon youth, but also the many other state and local programs that are facing cuts here in Oregon.

Thank you for your kind and thoughtful consideration.

Doug Dryden, President – Local 415 – (Oak Creek, Albany)
Janet Ferris, Vice President – Local 415 (Camp Tillamook & Tillamook YCF)
Gloria Soja, Secretary/Treasurer – Local 415 (Central Office, Salem)
Debra Mitzel, Chief Steward – Local 415 (MacLaren, Woodburn)
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