



Chairs Winters and Piluso, members of the Ways and Means Subcommittee on Public Safety,

My name is Dan Torres and I am a political coordinator with Oregon AFSCME Council 75. Oregon AFSCME represents 27,000 workers across the state including close to 90 folks at the Oregon Youth Authority. We are writing today to stand in support of SB 5541 the budget for the Oregon Youth Authority.

The Oregon Youth Authority has been a vital component of Oregon's judicial landscape and we applaud their continued success with our states youth. We stand in strong support of providing OYA the resource they need to continue their great work. We have seen proposals in the Governor's budget that call for a reduction in budget for OYA and that makes us concerned for a number of reasons.

The cuts proposed would negatively affect the key role and functions of OYA. We worry that any reduction in funding will lead to a reduction in staff which puts the success of many of OYA programs at risk. We represent OYA Juvenile Probation and Parole Officers who work in OYA to help youth build skills that are vital to their success and programs that increase their chances of stability after leaving OYA. Skills like conflict management, problem solving and good decision making are important to the process and our JPPO's go even further helping with educational, employment and healthy living access. JPPO's works closely with the local community providers to support and help hold individuals accountable while also acting as a bridge between the youth and their families. We ask that the committee look closely at cuts proposed and how that will affect these very important roles. A reduction in staff would affect not just OYA but Counties across that state that rely on this partnership in their communities.

Lastly I want to touch on the proposed reduction to the Community Services Budget. While this makes sense in a straight capacity/bed analysis the reality is that OYA is reliant on that money to support the program as a whole. As the agency undergoes a realignment of their budget it is important that we keep these funds whole so that there is no disruption in critical services that would set the agency back. As OYA continues to work towards individual support models it is important that they have some budget flexibility or risk losing great progress already achieved.

Lastly I want to show support for ongoing efforts from OYA to modernize and update their IT systems. Having a modern revamped system will increase efficiency and overall capability for the agency to carry out their mission. Staying on top of new technology and data systems can provide exponential benefits.

For these reasons and many others, Oregon AFSCME asks the committee to support OYA's budget in ways do not reduce services, staff, and capacity and gives them flexibility to continue their great work.