



TO: Ways and Means Sub-Committee on Public Safety

FR: Nancy Haque, Executive Director

DA: March 6, 2019

RE: Support for Oregon Youth Authority Budget SB 5541

Basic Rights Oregon works to ensure that all lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) Oregonians experience equality and we have partnered with the Oregon Youth Authority to address policies to improve outcomes for LGBTQ adjudicated youth. In particular, we would like to highlight three budget areas: equity and inclusion, medical/mental health service provision and capital investments in data collection, facilities improvements and education services.

Through our partnership with OYA, Basic Rights has come to see the need to improve staffing levels to specifically address the equity and culturally competent approach to providing treatment. Unfortunately, youth of color and LGBTQ youth are over-represented and often underserved in the public safety system. Service coordinators to address these needs are important to improving the outcomes for these youth, increase educational attainment and successfully address mental health/addiction treatment. (POP 108- 109)

Basic Rights is also eager to see adequate staffing of positions that will directly impact LGBTQ youth. In particular, supervising psychologist, treatment services and health services. (POP 104, 105, 106) The number of youth at OYA experiencing mental health issues has increased over the last five years and at least 75% of all OYA youth have a diagnosed mental disorder. Youth experiencing gender dysphoria are at particularly high risk for suicidal ideation and depression. Having physical and mental health staffing that can competently address the needs of these youth is critical to meeting their needs and helping them turn their lives around to become productive members of society.

Basic Rights supports maintaining key infrastructure and supports at the Oregon Youth Authority such as JJIS, capital investments and improved education services for youth. In particular, JJIS data is key to better understanding and managing public safety populations and the system has become antiquated (to say the least) and is long overdue for improvements. (POP 101)

Again, Basic Rights Oregon has been pleased to work collaboratively with the Oregon Youth Authority to establish policies that improve the management and treatment of LGBTQ youth in OYA custody. We support the work of OYA to make key improvements and urge the Committee to support the OYA budget and the Policy Option Packages outlined above.