



Service Employees International Union, Local 503, OPEU

Honorable Senator Jackie Winters, Co-Chair
Honorable Representative Carla Piluso, Co-Chair
Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Public Safety – Sen Manning; Sen Linthicum; Rep Stark; Rep Leif; Rep Sanchez and Rep Bynum
March 7, 2019

Dear Co-Chairs and members of the Committee:

Please find this letter in support of HB 5541, the Oregon Youth Authority (OYA) 2019-121 budget. As the agency’s primary labor partner, SEIU and our 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).

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 the 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.

We writing to ask you to fund the Oregon Youth Authority (OYA) at its current service level and to consider additional investments that would help it mitigate risks in key areas. Doing so will allow it to continue its nationally-recognized work to adopt the developmental approach, use data to improve youth outcomes, and to reduce the use of isolation while maintaining staff and youth safety. Funding OYA at current service level will help the agency continue these transformational efforts to promote safer communities for all Oregonians.

Two years ago, the Governor and the Legislature asked OYA to take a big cut with the closure of the North Coast Youth Correctional Facility in Warrenton and the merging of Hillcrest into MaLaren here in the Willamette Valley. As a team - the agency and its workers - made the transitions that were required. Please recognize that there are complications that come in having fewer placement options to manage youth treatment and behavior within the facilities. There isn’t a way to take a cut that deep without impacts to services – but they have adapted and will continue to do just that. We strongly support their request of a no service/staff cut budget given the degree of past cuts, safety of youth and staff, and system balance.

We also urge you to help OYA complete its three-biennium effort to align its budget with its services —which can be accomplished within OYA’s current service level funding. Having a transparent and accurate budget is good stewardship and it allows Oregonians to better understand the needs and risks within OYA’s budget. Please support the completion of this plan. Additional investments can also help the agency address risks in key areas. As you know, Oregon’s Juvenile Justice Information System (JJIS) — one of only three statewide juvenile justice databases in the nation — needs to be modernized to ensure it remains useful.

We know from past discussions with committee members that these are programs that you also agree are important to maintain. Let’s not lose the momentum that was gained over the last budget cycles with the agency’s work. We also recognize these are tough times that require difficult decisions, but you can count on SEIU to be supportive of Legislative processes to raise the revenue needed to not only support Oregon youth, but also the many other state programs that are facing cuts. Thank you for your past support of OYA’s work.

Respectfully,

Len Norwitz, SEIU 503 Political Staff
NorwitzL@seiu503.org
503-772-5801

Salem Headquarters	Bend	Portland	Corvallis	Medford	Euaene	Pendleton
1730 Commercial St. SE PO Box 12159 Salem, OR 97309-0159 503-581-1505 800-452-2146 (Fax) 503-581-1664	925 SE Second St. Suite C Bend, OR 97702-1756 541-385-8471 800-832-0593 (Fax) 541-388-9078	6401 SE Foster Road Portland, OR 97206-4659 503-408-4090 800-527-9374 (Fax) 503-408-4099	Physical Site/Do Not Mail 606 SW 15th St. Rm. 109 Corvallis, OR 97331-4606 541-752-0183 (Fax) 541-752-0241	1257 N Riverside #7 Medford, OR 97501 541-779-4324 800-452-7965 (Fax) 541-779-4325	488 E 11th Ave. Suite 100-B Eugene, OR 97401-3601 541-342-1055 800-521-3446 (Fax) 541-342-2932	200 SE Hailey Ave. Suite 302 Pendleton, OR 97801-3069 541-276-4983 800-452-8146 (Fax) 541-276-4984