

Co-Chairs Gorsek and Sollman, and members of the committee,

For the record, my name is Kathy Lamar, I'm a member of SEIU Local 503, and I work at Oregon Department of Justice in Salem. I have worked for the Agency for 22 years. I am here today as a frontline worker to ask your support for my Agency's budget.

1. DOJ serves thousands of Oregonians each year, including, among many other services, prosecuting those who target our seniors in fraudulent activities, providing funding for crime victims, and advocating for the children of Oregon. Although some of our work is funded federally, most of it is not. I am speaking on behalf of the staffing for the entire agency. Although the budget affects all of our employees, I would like to speak specifically about two sections of DOJ.

2. Every day, the Child Support Program establishes and modifies support orders for families in Oregon. We are a critical service to families to help them support their children, and we send millions of dollars to those families every month.

Division of Child Support has also worked for several years to get our new computer system in place. In order to transition to the new system, positions were held open. Now that we are in the new system, the workload has not decreased. After a year of COVID, hiring for vacant positions has been a challenge. We need to keep the positions we have – vacant or not - in order to lessen the overwhelming workload and to provide the quality services we need to.

For every dollar spent for the Oregon Child Support Program by the State of Oregon, we are matched 2 to 1 by the Federal Government - as long as we continue to meet the federal requirements. Although we have been able to provide services to the families of Oregon, we are at the lower end of the requirements; we need these positions to do the work and continue to receive federal funding.

3. In our Child Advocacy Section, our attorneys, paralegals, and legal secretaries are essential to work with Child Welfare to serve some of Oregon's most vulnerable population - children.

Child Advocacy Section has taken on nearly all of the work from the District Attorneys in recent years in representing the safety of children who are in Child Welfare's custody.

Although our staff in that section have been maintaining, they are barely able to do so.

They are inundated with a workload that is ever-changing and difficult to keep up with. To lose any positions would be devastating and could affect children across the state.

4. Throughout this pandemic and a crazy 2020-21, our essential, frontline workers have provided services nonstop for the state of Oregon, but to decrease the amount of staff would be devastating, not just for the employees who make this agency run, but even more so, to the Oregonians we serve. Please continue to fund the Department of Justice at the same level, if not better, than what the Agency is currently at, for Biennium 2021-2023.