



April 13, 2021

Co-Chairs Nosse and Lieber, members of the committee, for the record my name is Kyndall Mason; I am a political and policy strategist for SEIU Local 503, focusing on long term care. SEIU represents some 72,000 people across the state of Oregon. Overwhelmingly, these jobs intersect with our state's budget. Whether there are investments, or cuts, our members are performing much of the frontline and essential work in Oregon. I am here today, to highlight our members most affected by the APD and ODDS budgets. We represent more than 30,000 long term care workers, and personal support workers, who perform much of the direct care that Oregon's home and community-based investments provide. And we have many more members working diligently within state agencies to make sure the systems function.

My testimony today is in support of these workers and members, as well as reminder that current service levels have never been enough and would be nothing short of a cuts budget at this point. It is no secret that COVID-19 affected every industry. The supports and services provided by APD and ODDS, however, could not stop. Care providers literally put their own lives on the line to ensure quality of life for their clients and residents. They were deemed essential. They have been hailed heroes. I am asking that you make investments that reflect this sentiment.

It cannot be denied that this work is performed by mostly women and is overrepresented by the BIPOC and immigrant communities. These communities have overwhelmingly been on the frontlines performing essential functions of our society and taking care of our loved ones, many for just barely over minimum wage. We have asked year after year, for meaningful investments in these sectors so that change to stabilize the workforce and create better outcomes for recipients and workers alike can take shape. Age old assumptions rooted in racism and classism have no doubt made those investments hard to come by.

The state can absolutely, and must, play a role in lifting these jobs, out of poverty and in turn moving more than 100,000 workers providing direct care out of poverty. We do this as a state with prevailing wage laws connected to public works projects, which is taxpayer funded. Jobs for men, funded by the state seem to have living wages, career paths and quality training programs. Why can't we do the same for jobs performed by women and also taxpayer funded? The time is now to make the investments in these programs and reinforce the expectation that Medicaid provided supports and services in Oregon are innovative.

We will have what appears to be large federal investments in home and community-based care. Use this money to increase wages, streamline systems, develop a workforce plan that includes stackable portable training, invest in health care for long term workers. There is so much to do, and we will finally have the resources, do not miss this opportunity to make changes in Oregon that will affect the future of home and community-based care and set an example of how to get it right, for other states.

Service Employee International Union, Local 503

PO Box 12159

Salem, OR 97309-0159



You will be hearing from many of our members over the course of the upcoming road show and I hope you take their suggestions and stories to heart as you decided where to invest in Oregon's future.

Kyndall Mason  
Political & Policy Strategist  
SEIU Local 503