



**Service Employees International Union – Oregon State Council**  
6401 SE Foster ▪ Portland, OR 97206

March 3, 2021

Dear Chair Sanchez and Members of the Committee,

For the record, my name is Angelica Natalia Ceja Ochoa, and I am a member of SEIU 503. I have worked as a mental health therapy technician at the Oregon State Hospital for the past 13 years. I am here to speak in support of HB 2949.

I work with patients at the Oregon State Hospital who are struggling with mental illness. I also have family members who have interacted with our mental health care system. From both of these perspectives, I see the huge disconnect between the needs of our community and a mental health system that is overwhelmingly dominated by Anglo American culture and Caucasian professionals.

This disconnect is a huge problem because it means that people of color are not seen and heard by the mental health care system, and as a state we miss out on opportunities for people to get help. For example, I have worked with patients at the Oregon State Hospital whose culture is not well-reflected in the Hospital's Treatment Care Plans, resulting in a lack of understanding about how someone's lived experiences influences their health. I have also observed how a Caucasian mental health professional working with a family member who failed to recognize how much our culture influences my family member's relationships.

Oregon needs to invest in resources and supports that will ensure that our mental health system can better recognize and meet the needs of people who are Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC). One part of the solution is increasing access to mental health care, especially for the BIPOC population. We need more mental health providers who **are** BIPOC, so it's possible that everyone searching for mental health care can find a provider who not only understands but who can truly empathize and

work with their cultural background. HB 2949 advances these solutions by implementing strategies to develop a multicultural mental health workforce, increase our workforce of rural and culturally competent providers, and improve Oregon's national ranking in access to mental health care. I ask that you support HB 2949.