

Dear Chairs Sollman and Evans, and members of the committee,

I have been a corrections officer for the last 17 years, and I have seen how severe the impacts of consistent weekly forced overtime have affected our staff and AICs (Adults in Custody). When we take on these jobs, we know that we are frontline workers who are responsible for the safety of our correctional facilities, and sometimes that means we have to work overtime. But, the constant mandatory overtime, in addition to any volunteer overtime we work, creates inconsistent staffing, an inability to effectively train new staff, and abysmal staff morale.

We are clearly fatigued, and many of us are facing mental health issues like depression and anxiety. On numerous occasions, even our AICs have reported that they notice staff "dragging, almost like zombies". When we have to work unpredictable forced overtime, we feel disgruntled, exhausted, and are not fully coherent, which creates safety and security issues for all those working and housed inside the correctional institutions.

Mandatory overtime creates a domino effect in staff shortages, because it causes an increase in staff call-offs. When one person calls out, another person is going to have to work mandatory overtime for that shift. When we are short-staffed, the number and severity of workplace injuries increases dramatically. And we have been understaffed for a very long time.

Outside of the impacts that forced overtime has on my workplace, my home life is very inconsistent. I have no ability to plan or handle personal responsibilities (taking care of family, pets, chores, errands, etc.) because I never know when I will be forced to work mandatory overtime. This also impacts my relationships with family and friends because I spend more time at work than at home sometimes. I know that forced overtime has resulted in separation and/or divorce for a lot of staff. My personal life should not be greatly affected every week due to the Agency's inability to adequately staff our correctional institutions.

There needs to be some accountability to ensure the Agency maintains adequate staffing at each correctional institution to avoid continued mandatory overtime abuse, because the current system is not working. Please fund our agency so that we can hire more staff and make the necessary changes for our safety and well being.

Robert K. Nelson

Oregon Department of Corrections