



March 13, 2025

Sen. Anthony Broadman, Cochair

Rep. Paul Evans, Cochair

Subcommittee on Public Safety of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means

RE: HB 5004

Cochairs Broadman and Evans, and members of the Joint Subcommittee on Public Safety

Cochairs Broadman and Evans, thank you for the opportunity to testify on HB 5004, the Oregon Department of Corrections Budget,

Oregon AFSCME proudly represents over 39,000 members statewide, including the majority of DOC's Security and Security Plus Members who protect and serve Oregon's Adult in Custody (AIC) population. We represent a diversity of workers, from nurses, OB/GYN nurse practitioners and other providers, to counselors, security officers, payroll specialists, office specialists, and nurses, and many, many more.

In Director Reese's presentation, we heard how many parts of DOC need investment, but none is more important than the public servants who answer the call to serve 24/7. These state employees care about their work and rely heavily on their colleagues to meet the needs of the state - through birthdays, weekends, school plays and other missed family obligations. We are watching the new Director's work, and we are heartened by some of his choices.

One common priority is to increase DOC recruitment while retaining the existing DOC workers. At AFSCME, many of our DOC members are legacy DOC workers, and we see tight teams at each facility who try to support each other through short staffing. As a result, you may be surprised to know that non-security staff, like office specialists, are asked to directly support AICs alongside our officers, even though they don't have the training that the officers do. They oblige the request, because they see the wear overtime has on their colleagues. We see this DOC teamwork across at every institution, and we see the culture of serving each community alive and well at DOC. which is notable because these jobs are hard, grueling, and the 24/7

conditions are unsustainable – especially in some of the oldest structures during extreme heat and wildfire season.

Oregon AFSCME believes that increasing DOC's recruiting efficacy is key, which is why we are asking you to invest in DOC's workforce who are state employees. Increase the job quality of these positions, so workers feel safer in their job stations. With better wages and more skilled labor, they will become more comfortable referring their friends and families to these jobs again. When you have working conditions that require multiple 16-hour shifts in a week, indefinitely, and the salary and benefit package are not competitive. The workers that the state seeks to employ are not able to meet the demands of mandated overtime – even if they are open to some overtime. Many of our member rack up over 1000 hours of overtime in a calendar year, which is unsustainable.

The best employees we want to recruit are the people who have an honor outside commitments to lead full lives, like the basketball coach, the hunter safety instructor, parents, and loved ones. In terms of a business model, the most cost-effective way to increase our Public Safety workforce is to invest in the good ones you have.

Additionally, we hope you increase the number of staff employed by the state, which will also give greater access to medical care for AICs. We want to thank the Director's team who have provided technical assistance and support with AFSCME on a SB 24, that will increase wages for DOC state employed medical staff salaries. There are simply not enough medical staff to serve the 12,033 AICs we have in DOC. The Oregon Corrections Population Forecast, published October 2024, indicates that the AIC population will grow at a rate of 2.5% to an expected rate of 13,170 by 2034. The federal recommended ratios for doctors in custody is 1:200 Female AICs. Today, AFSCME Oregon members include the 15 State employed physician positions with 3 individuals on administrative leave, leaving 12 staff doctors.

Our members tell me that contracted nurses are retained on twelve-week intervals, are excluded from mandated hours, and are paid up to \$100 more an hour than the full-time state employed nurses, that they work alongside. This brings up several concerns, including inconsistencies of training for those contractors, including the constant onboarding and off ramping that state staff nurses are tasked with. All of which undermines AIC continuity of care.

Oregon AFSCME also supports the increased use of dog and full body scanners, for Coffee Creek and beyond to the other institutions, especially those on the borders of other states. The detection of potential hazards prior to entry that are also in line with GIPA and PREA best support providing a safe place for the high needs population and the people who support them.

Thank you,

Susan Allen
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