

Co-Chairs Lieber and Sanchez, and members of the committee. My name is Joellen Billington and I am ODHS CPS Worker out of the Burns office.

I am testifying today to ask you to prioritize protecting Oregonians and us immediate needs in your state budget, including SB 5536 POP 109.

CPS workers face real danger- verbal threats, physical intimidation- and after intense encounters, were expected to move on like nothing happened.

Have you ever had to call your family before heading out on a case- just in case you don't come back?

Have you ever been locked in your own workplace because someone was threatening you, law enforcement, and judges over a decision you had no choice but to make?

Have you ever knocked on the door of a home where the people inside already threatened you- alone, with no backup, just a notepad in hand?

This is our reality. We walk into hostile situations, taking the brunt of anger and fear. Yet, we don't get the protection others do.

I remember sitting in my car, heart pounding, phone in my hand. I took a deep breath and called my husband. "Hey, I just wanted to say I love you." He knew what that meant, it wasn't the first time. Be Careful, "He said, his voice thick with worry.

The threats- angry messages, over social media posts calling us out by name. Some cases are so volatile our office has gone into a lock in. Yet, when we ask for protection, we're told: We can't send an officer with you.

I checked the address-rural isolated. No backup, no way out if things go wrong. And the people inside? They already hate me for what I represent.

We don't get paid enough for this- not for fear, the danger, or the weight we carry. But we keep showing up- because the kids need us.

But who is protecting us?

We need change, we need support, and we need to stop accepting fear and burn out as just another part of the job. BECAUSE WE ARE PEOPLE. AND OUR SAFETY MATTERS TOO.

As you build the state budget, we call on you to reject any new Oregon tax breaks for corporations or the ultra-wealthy.

Please continue to hold the line on making unnecessary cuts based on speculation on what might happen in DC, which would simply be a signal to Elon Musk that you are willing to help cover the cost of billionaire tax breaks by sacrificing some of the most critical basic services Oregonians all rely on. Please prioritize a state budget which protects Oregonians rather than adding to the chaos.

Thank you,

Joellen Billington