



State and Homecare Workers UNITE in Historic Rally to Fund Public Services

Fifteen hundred state, personal support, homecare, and public services workers came together on Monday, May 20th at a historic rally to push for fair contracts and investments in public services.

Members of SEIU Local 503 from across Oregon marched through Salem and up to the steps of the Capitol Building, demanding that legislators hear the powerful voice of the workers at the heart of Oregon's public services infrastructure.

"Oregon can work together. Labor and business, community organizations and legislators, union families and the rest of our communities, towards a common purpose. We are united for a better Oregon," said Executive Director Melissa Unger to a crowd of SEIU members.

The rally is a part of a statewide campaign, United For A Better Oregon, targeting the underfunded and underinvested areas of Oregon's public services, including dire situations in the Child Welfare department, underfunded schools, and the need for increased services in the homecare and personal support sector. The rally came just days after a huge victory in the passage of the Student Success Act, which raises \$2 billion in revenue to fund education by taxing large corporations, and relieves pressure on the budget so we can invest in the public services our members provide.

"What does new revenue mean? It means better schools for our children and grandchildren. It means less pressure on the budget and opportunities to invest in services, from DHS to ODOT to DOJ to homecare and personal support workers to public universities and every other service provided by SEIU 503 members across the state," says Unger.

The majority of 72,000 people who make up SEIU 503 are bargaining new contracts this year, which is why it's so important to put pressure on legislators and management.

"I'm here today to support my brothers and sisters in the right to unite and have a better, stronger Oregon, including fighting for PERS and homecare," says SEIU 503 homecare leader Maleta Christian. "The stronger we are, the louder we are, we can then fight for all of Oregon."

In addition to celebrating our win on revenue, we are pushing back on a proposal to cut the retirement of public employees, forcing down their total compensation to pay for a financial liability that they had no part in creating. For many public employees, who often make less than their private sector counterparts, the state pension system is one of the main benefits that draws them into public employment. Without that, it will be difficult to attract talented new workers and become increasingly hard to keep seasoned staff who are struggling to make ends meet on non-competitive compensation packages.

