Written Testimony Submitted to the 2017 CEC Committee

To whom it may concern with the CEC Committee:

My name is Dallas Payton, I am a Clinical Supervisor with the Idaho Department of Juvenile Corrections in Nampa Idaho. I supervise a clinical staff of 6 employees. Five of the employees I supervise are Master’s level licensed clinicians. The current pay schedule for these employees is at least $2.00 per hour lower that other comparative positions with other state agencies in Idaho, and even more so lower than wages for comparative positions with private employers. The staff I supervise are hardworking and dedicating to the mission and values of IDJC. State employees, such as the team I supervise, have no expectation of becoming wealthy as public servants, however to retain employees, such as on my team who go above and beyond in their duties routinely in a variety ways becomes more difficult when other agencies within the same state government pay more for the same position. Beyond this, replacing employees in this classification when starting wages are so low, becomes even more difficult. The last position I hired for took a year to fill. The primary reason the applicants we offered the position to declined, was due to the starting salary not being competitive enough. We were unable to even compete with interested State employees from other agencies serving in the same classification. I implore this committee to provide pay increases to our public servants serving the State of Idaho, as the challenges I have outlined above, are not confined to IDJC and this classification alone. Please reward our State employees with the fair compensation they deserve. Thank you for permitting me the opportunity to provide my feedback on this important issue.

Respectfully, Dallas W. Payton
Dallas Payton, M.A., LCPC
Region II Clinical Supervisor
Idaho Department of Juvenile Corrections

I would like to vote in support of a pay increase as it is very much needed. This is a high demand job and it is difficult to meet the cost of living with the current pay. It is time for an increase and to recognize State employees with the pay they deserve in a field of high turnover.

Thank You, Kristi James
First off, thank you for a raise. Any raise is, of course, appreciated. However, I have noticed that the latest system is set up to make sure mostly, only management positions get the full 3%. It is always “announced” as being a 3% raise, when in fact it is most likely a 2% for most of us. An employee has to do something outstanding to get the advertised 3% raise. Idaho is so far behind in pay scale, which is why we lose so much money in training time, because young clinicians come through our office for, what turns out to be 6mos to 1yr of training, and then they go to another business for better pay. I understand Washington is getting a minimum wage increase soon. That will affect us even more. We need less waste in this system, such as all the plane travel and costs incurred, when we most often could handle our meetings on video conference. We pay for travel, hotel, automobile, food, when a simple video conference would usually do. Please put the money back into the employees. Thank You.

I may have mentioned this before. But it bears repeating. Janalie Anello

Mr. Chairman, members of the Committee, my name is Micah Buck and I’m from Twin Falls. I am writing with my concern about the modest employee compensation increase of 3 percent that you are considering. Competitive wages are vital to recruiting and retaining qualified professionals such as occupational therapists, physical therapist, speech therapists and developmental therapists. Nationwide and statewide the demand for these professions as well as their wage is growing at a rate above the national average for all jobs according to bls.gov. An annual wage increase is a necessary part of maintaining a competitive wage for professionals employed by the state of Idaho. Thank you for your consideration.

Micah Buck, OTR/L
Early Interventionist, Occupational Therapy, Children’s Programs
Owen Hirschi  
Instructor Specialist, Idaho Department of Juvenile Corrections

To whom it may concern: I am a State employee who is in my 25th year in my position. I am an Instructor Specialist for the Department of Juvenile Corrections. Over the years, I have seen many employees in our department come and go for a variety of reasons. I have noticed that it is becoming harder to recruit and keep good, quality employees. It is more difficult to compete with the jobs in other areas. It seems that the State has also recognized this and has been taking steps to help alleviate this problem. I would like to address the concern of long-term employees.

It seems to me that the longer I work as a State Employee, there is less concern with keeping me and others in similar situations. As I understand it, it seems that the practice of the CEC increases is to try and get workers more to what is known as Policy Rate. This seems to be the medium, or average of employee salaries. If you are below Policy Rate, then they want to give you more increase so you are closer to the average. If you are above the rate, such as you should be with very much longevity, then you might receive less increase to bring Policy Rate closer to your salary. It therefore seems that longevity is actually punished in a sense.

Idaho State employees generally start in their positions and earn 3.7hr\pay period in sick leave, and 3.7hr\pay period in vacation leave. The sick leave never increases, but vacation leave increases every 5 years until the maximum is reached of 6.5hr/pay period. This happens at about the 15 year mark. After that is reached, there is no increase. Vacation leave can accrue to a maximum amount, 336 hours, then if not used, it is lost. Sick leave continues to accrue until employment is terminated. As I understand it, half of accrued sick leave hours can be used to pay for continued health care premiums. But this is limited to half of up to 1200 hours, or 600 total hours of paid sick leave. If I accrue more than the 1200 hours, it would just be lost upon termination of employment. Again, it seems that there is little concern for dedicated, long-term employees.

I would like the legislature to consider ways to address this concern. If an employee meets the criteria for a percentage raise, it should apply to all employees equally. Giving more to those below a certain rate, just to bring them closer to average is unfair and demoralizing to those above that same rate. My efforts to meet, or even exceed expectations, feel less meaningful when this happens. My work should be just as valued as any new employee, and probably even more so based on just the experience that comes over the course of a career.

I recognize that vacation and sick leave are financial liabilities on state budgets. However, I think that something could be done to reward longer-term employees. Perhaps an increase in vacation leave could still be granted. Or increase the sick leave hours once vacation leave can no longer be increased. The liability would still be the same in that we would still only use the 600 hours, if saved, in health care premiums after termination. A plaque and simple recognition almost feel condescending. I believe that the State can do better in recognizing and
Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee,

Thank you for your time. My name is Christie L. Beeler and I am from Coeur d’Alene. I am happy to hear that there is consideration for a 3% pay increase. I am concerned that by not voting for this to pass that our state employees will look elsewhere for employment. Here in Coeur d’Alene we are close to Washington, where they just passed an increase on minimum wage to $11 and it is scheduled to continue to rise over the next few years. Just last week, at Cinnabon on Sullivan RD in Spokane Valley, WA, which is exactly 20.5 miles from the Coeur d’Alene DHW office, there is a sign that reads; “$11/hr to $18/hr DOE” and that sign is still up today.

It would be sad to see great employees leave to work at a Cinnabon or a place like it just for a pay increase to be able to support their families.

I am speaking for only myself and am requesting that this important Committee please approve the pay increase.

The maximum monthly income limit for food stamps for our great state has increased. Now for a family of 5 if the income is less than $3,081/mo, that family can get approved for assistance. I make $367 less than that limit amount a month, I understand a 3% increase will not get me up to that amount; however, it would help my family. It would help me continue to want to come to work and give the 100% I give every day w/out feeling defeated when my check comes in.

I won’t apply for benefits as I feel it is wrong to work for this great state and still need help.

This pay increase you are voting on will make a difference in my family’s life and I am sure for so many other hard working individuals that work at Idaho Department of Health and Welfare.

There have been a lot of changes, a lot of people leaving, and this 3% pay increase will help those still here and going through the changes see that they are valuable and that the work they continue to do through these changes has been well worth it.

Again I urge you to pass this and thank you for your time.

Christie L. Beeler
Self-Reliance Specialist, NHUB/Child Support
Dear Members of the CEC committee and to whom else it may concern,

My name is Breonna Krafft and I am a clinician with the Idaho Department of Juvenile Corrections (IDJC) in Nampa, Idaho. I came to this position with two master’s degrees as both a Licensed Professional Counselor and a National Certified Counselor. In addition to those qualifications, prior to employment I obtained training in EMDR, a specific evidenced-based trauma treatment which I utilize often at IDJC. I am highly involved in the counseling community in Boise, including leadership within the Idaho Counseling Association. I came to work for the state due to a passion for rehabilitating juveniles. I genuinely believe the juveniles in the custody of IDJC are at a point in their lives where they can make significant changes and, with the appropriate support and counseling in program, can leave our facility as productive members of society who do not end up in the adult system after they turn 18. Were I in the community, my compensation would be significantly higher than working for the state, which is to be expected. However, even within the correctional facilities within the state, the starting wage for a clinician with Juvenile Corrections is at least $2.00 less than the starting wage in the other correctional systems (for example, the starting range for clinicians in the adult correctional system is a range between $22.26 and $24.18, whereas clinicians with juvenile corrections start at $20.87 with no room for negotiation). This means that salaries for clinicians at IDJC are not only not competitive compared to community positions, but salaries are also not competitive for comparable state positions. I am proud of what I do and of the impact I am able to make at pivotal points in the lives of juveniles within our care. I believe that investing in those who contribute to the successful future of our state juveniles is at least as valuable as investing in those who work in the adult system. I request that this committee sincerely consider providing pay increases to the clinicians who fall under the IDJC umbrella. We work very hard with some of the most difficult juveniles in the state, and believe we are at least as valuable as those who work within the other correctional systems. Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,

Breonna Krafft, NCC, LPC
Choices Clinician
Idaho Department of Juvenile Corrections
Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, my name is Rick L Poisel and I'm from Pocatello. I work for the Division of Veteran Services as a Veterans Service Officer. I am concerned about the hourly wage that we make in this position. I have been considering moving to another state and taking on this position there. The wage is higher and the cost of living there is much lower. I have looked into the comparison of income vs COL and though it is great here, there are other states that the percentage is much better. I know I am not alone in this thought. I love what I do and though it is quite taxing both mentally and sometimes physically. I hope you will find this information useful in your decision. Have a great day and thank you for taking the time to read this.

Rick Poisel

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I am writing to offer testimony in support of any CEC increase that the State of Idaho can accommodate.

I want to briefly mention an unfortunate situation that I see at my agency. I work with some of the most talented, driven, and knowledgeable people I have ever known. Almost all of us hold advanced degrees, including Masters, and PhDs. Almost all of us work two and three jobs to make ends meet. We love our work, we believe in our mission, and we enjoy each other as co-workers. We work these extra jobs in order to stay with the State job we love. Working two and three jobs, however, is not a long term, sustainable solution.

Unfortunately, none of the people I work with plan to retire with the Historical Society, or with the state. The pay just is not there. It is too low to comparative jobs at Boise City, Boise State, and every state surrounding Idaho. My co-workers and I comment frequently about how we wish we could stay working at the Historical Society forever. Right now, that is not an option. The State of Idaho is habitually below market rates and has been too slow to adjust. This is forcing us to make future plans, outside of state government. It is forcing us to leave a job that we love and would give our careers to.

Thank you for any consideration.

Respectfully,

Alan Butcher

Government Records Archivist
My name is Rosa, I am an employee at the Department of Health and Welfare in Twin Falls, I am speaking for myself and not as a representative of the Department or in my official capacity as a Department employee. I was hesitant to write a testimony but lately have been very discouraged due to what I feel is inequitable employee compensation. I have worked for the department for over 5 years and just about a year ago found out that I was making less than new hires. As the cost of living has gone up so has the starting rate for new hires, yet those of us who have invested years in the organization are faring worse. I was told the best they could do was bring me up to the minimum starting wage, which did happen yet still feels unfair because I have invested many years with this organization and have really strived to make the program better but I’m getting paid the same or less than employees who have been with the Department a very short time. I know I’m not the only one in this situation and request that you consider the effects this has on employee morale. I know you care about the Department’s employees and work hard to come to the best decisions regarding employee compensation, I’m not sure this is something you can help with but I appreciate you taking the time to read my testimony regardless.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely, Rosa Paz

My name is Colleen Foster I am from Wilder Idaho. I am part of the clinical team for the Idaho Department of Juvenile Corrections. I have been with the state for almost 24 years. With my experience and expertise in working with juveniles, families and my fellow employees I find myself very limited to move up in my position and continue to have my job be a career that challenges me in building my skills and leadership. I find that the rewards of being in public service are the work I do to help youth and their families get along better and hopefully make better choices as the return to community. This is rewarding but having the state recognize years of service, quality of work and the stresses of long term public service on family and health is just as important. I do not have a Master’s degree but I am a Certified CADC for Drug and Alcohol counseling and have been working with high risk populations my entire time with the state. The retirement benefits, Health insurance, and pay are incentives to stay. I feel they need to be revisited to match market value. I saw in this last year the loss of many good employees, because the stress of the service in this field was not worth the continued service. You are losing far too many good people because the pay, health care packages and retirement are not enough to keep us going in a system that is a dangerous, and works with
difficult populations. Experience is far too valuable to lose when working with this population. Things need to improve in the benefits so we can slow down the turnover and keep people who have a heart for this work as well as the skills. Please consider my request when looking at the changes ahead for state employees.

Thank You for your time

Sincerely Colleen Foster, Rehabilitation Specialist CADC

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Dear Lawmakers:

I am writing to you express my deep concerns with the low wages that I and many of my fellow co-workers receive as state employees with Boise State University. I have worked for the university for more than 4 ½ years and make $12.23 per hour as a senior landscape technician. Many of my fellow co-workers work for similar hourly rates and are only able to work at the university because they have a spouse that also works. Others within the department take on second jobs or perform other side work to supplement their income. And still others receive public assistance to make ends meet each month.

The Alliance for a Just Society recently produced a 50 state study as part of their "Job Gap Economic Prosperity Series" [http://allianceforajustsociety.org/2015/10/pay-up-long-hours-and-low-pay-leave-workers-at-a-loss/] and found in part that a "living wage for a single adult in the State of Idaho is $14.51 per hour. This reflects what is needed to meet basic needs and maintain some ability to deal with emergencies and plan ahead." The study also found that a "living wage for a single adult with two children is $25.56 per hour."

Personally, I believe that all employees should have the dignity of earning enough income to provide for their family, without having to turn to public assistance or having to take on second and third jobs just to get by. I think the severity of problem for many state employees warrants consideration on new methods in how the state approaches salary compensation. It is my hope that whatever the committee recommends on merit increases, that it will also include some recommendations on possible amendments to the state code providing for annual cost of living increases and longevity raises for employees. Thank you for time and consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,

Scott Cook