

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE OREGON STATE SENATE AND HOUSE IN SUPPORT OF SENATE
BILL 454 and HOUSE BILL 2005.

February 16, 2015

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. My name is Andrea Miller, I'm here representing Causa, an organization that has worked for the last 20 years to advocate for issues impacting Latino immigrant families in Oregon.

We strongly support Senate Bill 454 and House Bill 2005 that would ensure all working Oregonians can earn a reasonable number of paid sick days every year regardless of the industry they work in.

Right now, too many low-income workers can't afford to take a single day off work for illness. Latino workers in particular, are disproportionately impacted by a lack of paid sick time. **About 62% of Latino workers in Oregon lack paid sick time, compared to 47% of the general workforce.** This is unacceptable and I commend the legislature for taking up this important issue.

As you contemplate the proposal, I'd like to raise an important issue for Latino workers in particular, many of who work seasonal or temporary jobs. The legislation before you considers a 90-day waiting period before workers can access any paid sick time they have accrued.

Causa believes this waiting period is too long and will preclude many temporary workers from accessing the paid sick time they have earned. We understand, however, that this is a compromise position and are supportive of the bill as drafted.

But I know there are opponents who would like to see this waiting period extended to 180-days. Extending the waiting period effectively cuts out a huge portion of Latino workers who work seasonal or temporary jobs.

These workers are the most impacted by the lack of paid sick days and are the workers who need it the most. For example, let's take a look at farmworkers. Farmworkers are among America's lowest paid workers, averaging \$9,000 for seasonal workers and \$14,000 for full-time workers.

According to a 2011 report by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, of the U.S. Department of Labor, agriculture remains one of the most dangerous industries in the U.S. with some of the highest incidence of occupational injury and illness. Agricultural workers face unique occupational hazards specific to farm work, including pesticide exposure, skin disorders, infectious diseases, respiratory problems, and hearing and vision disorders.

Not only do these workers need paid sick days the most, but they are also the ones handling your food products before they reach your table. This is also a matter of public health to prevent the spread of illness by allowing workers that handle Oregonian's food to stay home when they're ill and not suffer an economic burden at the same time.

Every attempt should be made to ensure that full-time as well as seasonal farmworkers are included in the legislation. We strongly oppose any attempts to extend the wait period to 180 days because most, if not all, seasonal farmworkers would be excluded.

Paid sick time is a basic standard that every Oregon worker should be able to count on. Causa strongly urges passage of SB 454 and HB 2005.