



TO: House Business & Labor Committee  
RE: House Bill 2016  
ON: March 11, 2019

Chair Barker, Vice-Chairs Barreto and Bynum, members of the committee,

For the record my name is Steven Demarest. I am the President of SEIU Local 503, Oregon Public Employees Union. I am here in support of House Bill 2016. SEIU Local 503 represents almost 31,000 public workers in state agencies, local governments, and higher education who make Oregon a better place to live, work, and learn. SEIU 503 members include DHS workers who provide direct services to over one million Oregonians each year, ODOT and local government workers who put in long hours to ensure safe roads and infrastructure, Parks workers who keep our public parks beautiful and accessible, and many more.

HB 2016 puts in place common sense protections for public workers. Most of the language in this bill simply formalizes in statute agreements and best practices that are already widely accepted. The proposed changes aim to further the goals of the Public Employee Collective Bargaining Act ("PECBA"), as set forth in the Policy Statement in ORS 243.656. That Policy Statement encourages, among other things, "practices fundamental to the peaceful adjustment of disputes," and "the development of harmonious and cooperative relationships between government and its employees." The Policy Statement recognizes that the alternative is injurious to the public.

I am here to provide context for certain provisions of the bill, and to explain how these issues practically function, based on extensive firsthand experience. Specifically, my brief statement focuses on the role of "designated representatives," in particular those known as "stewards." These are the workplace leaders who take on the responsibility of working directly with their employer to strive for workplace harmony and strong labor-management relationships.

Prior to becoming President, I was a union steward for many years as a state employee. In that role, I filed grievances to ensure our collective bargaining agreement was properly enforced and to provide due process for workers. But far more often, I communicated and mediated between bargaining unit workers and managers at multiple levels. I precipitated dispute resolutions and workplace improvements, and productive careers of workers.

Section 3 of the bill outlines these and other activities that "designated representatives" may perform in the course of their duties for the benefit of both the labor organization and the public employers. The proposed changes would ensure that all designated representatives receive the same protections under state law to perform the mutually beneficial duties required by the labor organization to represent public employees.

I urge you to pass HB 2016 in order to clarify existing law and precedent, and to codify in state law best practices that are in the best interest of employees, employers, and the public.

Thank you,

Steve Demarest  
President  
SEIU Local 503, OPEU

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