



Oregon's Farmworkers Union

May 6, 2019

Chair Williamson, Vice-Chair Gorsek, Vice-Chair Sprenger, Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of Senate Bill 726.

PCUN's fundamental goal is to empower farmworkers and low wage Latino workers to understand and take action against systematic exploitation and all of its effects. To achieve this end, PCUN is involved in community and workplace organizing on many different levels. We have worked to empower farmworkers, and Latino low-wage working families in the Mid-Willamette Valley for over 40 years.

Oregon's farmworker women and mothers today continue to face the threat of sexual violence as part of their daily occupational lives. In Oregon, there are about 87,000 farmworkers; about 20% are women according to national data. Of these farmworkers, about 40% are indigenous and speak almost only indigenous languages.¹ In a study conducted by the University of California, Santa Cruz in 2010, 80% of 150 farmworker women experienced sexual harassment in the workplace.² Here in Oregon, it is not much different. A study conducted in the Mid-Willamette Valley in 2006-2008; with 59 farmworker women also showed many had experienced or recognized sexual harassment in the workplace.³

At PCUN, we believe all workers should have a say in what affects their bodies, and their health. Senate bill 726 would better protect farmworker women that have faced discrimination in the workplace. We know that current laws don't go far enough to protect harassment victims at work. We know that it takes more than a year for most victims to come forward because they feel shame and they fear retaliation. With 75% of women facing retaliation from a sexual harassment claim⁴, this is a legitimate fear. Workers in low wage industries are especially vulnerable as they are the most likely to face discrimination in the workplace and are the least likely to know their recourse options. By expanding the time that harassment allegations can be brought forward from one year to five, we are giving all of our workers a fair shot at justice.

At PCUN, we continue to be committed to addressing sexual harassment in the fields. We are launching a farmworker women outreach program in the Mid-Willamette valley that serves farmworker women and mothers affected by unhealthy working environments. The purpose of this program is to create healthier outcomes for farmworker women, mothers, and their families- by calling for an end to sexual violence.

¹ Larson, Alice. "Oregon Update Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker Enumeration Profiles Study". (2013): 38

² Irma Morales Waugh. 2010. Examining the sexual harassment experiences of mexican immigrant farmworking women. *Violence Against Women* 16 (2): 245.

³ Murphy, Jeanne, Julie Samples, Mavel Morales, and Nargess Shadbeh. 2015;2014;. "They talk like that, but we keep working": Sexual harassment and sexual assault experiences among mexican indigenous farmworker women in oregon. *Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health* 17 (6): 1838.

⁴ https://www.eeoc.gov/eeoc/task_force/harassment/upload/report.pdf

We believe farmworker women and low wage Latina women should be safe at their workplace. After all, many spend a significant amount of their lives there. We believe that we can live in an Oregon where farmworker women and low wage Latina women do not have to worry about their physical health and safety in the workplace.

PCUN respectfully requests the committee to support SB 726 and commends Sen. Taylor and the committee for giving this legislation due consideration in service to your constituencies and Oregonians from across the state.

Thank you,
Martha Sonato
Political Director
PCUN, Oregon's Farmworker Union