



A STRONG VOICE FOR OREGON'S WORKERS

TO: Chair Riley
Vice-Chair Hansell
Members of the Senate Committee on Labor and Business

FR: Catie Theisen, Oregon AFL-CIO

RE: Support of SB 588

February 4, 2021

The Oregon AFL-CIO represents 300,000 workers across Oregon and is a voice for all workers in the legislative process. As such, we support SB 588 to extend paid sick leave to thousands of workers who are currently excluded -- namely collectively bargained hiring hall construction workers and theatrical stage employees across Oregon.

The benefits of paid sick time for workers, employers and the economy as a whole are numerous. According to the Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine, working sick costs the national economy \$234 billion annually in lost productivity -- surpassing the cost of absenteeism. Access to preventative care also has long term impacts on health insurance costs: Workers without paid sick days are twice as likely to defer care and thus seek more costly emergency room care for themselves and 2.5 times more likely for their children or other relatives.¹ Further, by creating an economic environment where workers feel valued and are able to utilize basic benefits like paid sick time, morale improves and costly turnover rates are reduced.

As we continue to face a global pandemic, it's imperative to critically examine the structural inequities COVID-19 has only highlighted. Black and Latinx people, women, and mothers have been hardest hit by both the health and economic impacts of the pandemic. We know that these workers are also disproportionately primary care-givers and the lack of paid leave -- even in part of the economy -- has undoubtedly had a negative impact on these workers' ability to remain in the workforce -- and remain in or pursue careers in industries like construction and the theatrical arts.

In Oregon, over 1 in 9 COVID cases stem from workplace outbreaks.² We know that when workers do not have paid time off, they are 1.5 times more likely to go to work even when they have a contagious illness.³ Acting on SB 588 now to make sure as many workers as possible can stay home when they are sick is a critical part of the COVID-19 containment strategy to safely and effectively reopen our economy.

SB 588 simply extends the same minimum protections and ability to accrue earned sick leave to workers currently excluded from the program. This would enable approximately 25,000 union construction workers and stage hands to be able to accrue paid sick leave now and as we continue to weather this pandemic.

It's critical that the legislature use every tool in its tool box to limit the spread of COVID-19 and to build an economy that actively seeks to address structural racism and sexism in Oregon. We encourage your Yes vote on SB 588.

¹ <https://www.nationalpartnership.org/our-work/resources/economic-justice/paid-sick-days/paid-sick-days-good-for-business-and-workers.pdf>

² https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/e/2PACX-1vR3qMF3GAHbLEgdfJwz3i7pCR3WKPakCZuI0mhjozWTWxwTNal9vmCn_5xEXHKEf36SJeBSr_KfaPov/pubhtml

³ Smith, T. W., & Kim, J. (2010, June). Paid Sick Days: Attitudes and Experiences. National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago for the Public Welfare Foundation Publication