



Chair Riley, Vice Chair Hansell, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Mike Powers, I use he/him pronouns. I am the President of SEIU Local 503. I live and work in Salem, Oregon. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony as your committee considers how to address workers' compensation claims processing to adequately address worker needs. We support HB 801 with the -2 amendments.

Service Employees International Union is 85,000 members strong in Oregon and SW Washington, and has 2 million members nation-wide. Our members include janitors, health care workers, care providers, public workers, and more.

We share the concern that since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, data appears to show that the success rate of workers compensation claims is affected by the type of insurance used by the employer. For example, SAIF shows an 86% acceptance rate. Meanwhile, private plans have about a 49%, and self-insured employers have a 55% acceptance rate. These numbers seem to show a disparity in the system.

In addition, COVID workplace outbreak-related cases from sectors such as retail, Food and Beverage processing, and warehousing are greatly underrepresented in the filing of workers compensation claims. It is likely that working Oregonians are, instead of filing claims, accessing personal health insurance or the Oregon Health Plan, using paid time off, or working through injuries and illnesses until they become bigger health issues that require acute care.

We support the proposal to utilize a task force to support additional research, in part because the Member-Labor Advisory Committee (MLAC) is not resourced nor directed to fill this purpose. The task force would be able to consider questions such as whether systemic disparities exist between insurer types, and whether workers are persuaded from filing claims. To inform the MLAC, we support the concept that the MLAC co-chairs will be voting members of the task force.

Thank you for your very important work to protect working Oregonians and ensure the safety and security of where we work.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Mike Powers'.

Mike Powers

President  
SEIU Local 503, OPEU