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Testimony of Arthur Towers

OTLA Political Director

In Opposition to the -A3 Amendment to HB 2818

Before the Senate Committee on Labor and Business

April 29, 2021

Chair Riley, Vice-Chair Hansell, members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in strong opposition to the -A3 amendment to HB 2818-A and support for the base bill, HB 2818-A.

This amendment creates a terrible precedent by designating work time or break time as “insubstantial.” Oregon has serious issues with wage theft, and the creation of the legal concept of insubstantial work time will open the flood gates for further erosion of workers’ rights in this area.

The amendment creates a context in which workers will be coerced to shave time off their breaks.

The reason protection of meal breaks and rest breaks was created in the first place was because employers were denying this basic safety provision. Your predecessors fifty years ago heard the stories and decided to act. This amendment would set things back for workers who need the rest and the nourishment to do their job safely.

The legislature should be taking steps forward on worker safety, especially since it is becoming clearer that worker safety is a civil rights issue: the most dangerous jobs are more and more likely to be filled by workers of color and immigrant workers. This is a step backward.

The *Mazza* decision makes it clear there needs be a meaningful remedy for workers who have their break times limited. The amendment would limit the impact on employers who infringe on workers’ rights. We urge rejection of this dangerous and far-reaching amendment.