



Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 483

May 6, 2021

House Committee On Rules

Russell Lum

Good afternoon Chair Smith Warner, Vice Chairs Drazan and Holvey, and members of the committee. My name is Russell Lum, I am a political organizer for Oregon Nurses Association. We represent 15,000 nurses – including RNs and advanced practice nurses – and allied health workers. Oregon Nurses Association and the Nurse Practitioners of Oregon strongly encourage you to pass SB 483.

SB 483 is about keeping workers employed, keeping them safe, and keeping their voice valued in their workplace when they raise health and safety concerns. There are many such concerns to raise. 2020 was year in which ten times the usual number of complaints were submitted to Oregon OSHA. Health at work is paramount. This is our members' view as it pertains to their (of course high-risk) facilities in the health care sector. But it is also our members' view because, in general, having a job — further, having a job where you are not discriminated against or endangered — is itself an important determinant of health.

Workers need more supports. The COVID-19 pandemic illuminated several areas where the legislature can act, to provide these supports. Reversing the burden of proof for who shows retaliation occurring or not occurring in cases of worker discipline over the worker's raising of a concern is one such area.

A workforce in undue fear of retaliation or feeling muzzled to speak up for health and safety is good for no one, except our state's worst employers. It is certainly not good for public health. It is a recipe for the spread of infectious disease and increased strain on hospitals, clinics, and other parts of our health system.

Especially in a pandemic, Oregon's nurses serve in a frontline role knowing that everything about their working conditions is in fact tied to the varying degrees of health or ill health that feature in others' working conditions.

Oregon Nurses Association is proud to support legislative efforts to increase health and wellness, to rebalance disproportionate impacts on the vulnerable, to look out for patients, and to keep some, indeed, from needing treatment and becoming patients in a sense, such as in cases of workplace hazard causing injury.

I ask you to share in this thinking with ONA and see the good sense and good values in Senate Bill 483, and advance 483 for swift passage.