



Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 418

February 7, 2023

Senate Committee on Labor and Business

Russell Lum

Chair Taylor, Vice Chair Bonham, and members of the committee, thank you for receiving this testimony from Oregon's nurses in support of SB 418. My name is Russell Lum, I am a political organizer for Oregon Nurses Association. ONA represents 15,000 nurses — including RNs and advanced practice nurses — and allied health workers. Our members, whether hospital employees or providers of home care or providers of primary care and many other settings, bring people back to health. Nurses will always advocate for care that is effective, compassionate, equitable, and accessible.

In that vein, we want Oregon patients receiving care when they need it, rather than being caught in the bind of what necessary care costs them in their employee benefits schedule.

Senate Bill 418 legislates that health appointments related to a worker's compensable injury or occupational disease claim be paid time off for the worker (if the appointment falls in the worker's scheduled shift), without the worker draining their leave banks or being required to pick up a different shift. SB 418 directs employers to create a policy to this effect.

The bill would result in more complete recovery for injured Oregonians, and employees who are more whole of body and mind to participate in their jobs. The employment factor is not lost on nurses, workers themselves, who work jobs prone to disease contracted at the worksite. To underscore, with the pandemic experience obviously putting it in even clearer light: Oregon's nurses know the toll of workers' compensation injuries and illnesses. With worker's compensable injury and occupational disease, we are dealing only with cases of a worker needing care due to the fact that they did their job; they showed up to work. Senate Bill 418 and the workers' comp system to which it is linked operate in the space where it is not the worker's burden to make themselves whole.

For this reason, we see the bill as an alignment of what is afforded workers on the workers' compensation side with what is afforded workers on the benefits side in their employer's policy. Oregon's nurses look forward to your support of this concept which makes Oregon fairer to injured workers and healthier overall.