



Chair Taylor, Vice Chair Bonham and members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of SB 592. My name is Joe Moore and I'm the chief steward at Benton County with AFSCME Local 2064.

I took on the role of chief steward in response to the death of my co-worker, Pete Neuman in August of 2019. Pete was using a John Deere skidder to move logs at a road-building project in south Benton County. The machinery malfunctioned, rolled down a steep hillside and overturned on top of him.

Prior to this event, my coworkers had told our supervisor we thought the equipment was unsafe, but those concerns were ignored. Investigations found numerous safety issues with the skidder, including frequent stalling, brake failures, bald rear tires and a jury-rigged seat belt. Pete's death was entirely preventable.

Oregon OSHA came to investigate and issued a \$30,000 penalty to Benton County. It's deeply upsetting that this penalty is the outlier when it comes to the penalties Oregon OSHA assesses when a worker dies on the job as the result of serious – and more often than not – wholly preventable hazards. Because Pete was a union member, we were able to make sure his death did not go unnoticed and that light was shed on the total negligence that took place. But \$30,000 as a high penalty for a preventable death should not be the norm.

If a whole-workplace investigation had been done in the months after Pete's death, Oregon OSHA may have discovered that the County's emergency communications system was not working in public works, meaning that workers had to drive into cell phone range in order to call 911 or that the system for tagging unsafe vehicles was not working and several other pieces of heavy equipment needed repair or replacement – all of which we had to investigate ourselves.

Because of the voice I have through my union, I am able to be active in our workplace safety. But I know for workers without a union, it is so much harder for them to speak up and be heard. I can only imagine the hundreds of thousands of hazards that go unaddressed because OSHA rarely – or never – investigates their work place, or because workers don't feel like they can speak up or don't have the resources to do so.

Higher penalties to disincentive hazards before they occur paired with better follow-up after an injury or death could have made all the difference at my workplace.

Oregon OSHA's mission is to protect Oregon workers. But it's clear that the current enforcement strategies are letting us down. Please support SB 592 to help better protect Oregon workers.