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February 14, 2023

Senate Committee on Labor and Business
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court St. NE Salem Oregon 97301

Re: SB 530 - Support

Dear Chair Taylor, Vice Chair Bonham and Members of the Senate Committee on Business and Labor:

Verde is a community-based organization whose mission is to build environmental wealth through organizing, advocacy, and social enterprise. Environmental wealth means not only clean air and water, but it also means safe workplaces. As such, Verde strongly encourages you to support SB 592 to improve workplace safety and health in Oregon.

SB 592 improves current safety and health practices with the goal to make all workplaces in Oregon safer. Currently, Oregon OSHA can assess a penalty when an injury or death occurs as a result of a serious safety and health violation like a lack of training, equipment maintenance or supervision, preventable exposure to toxins, or even lack of safety gear like harnesses or hard hats.

Workers of color are disproportionately impacted. The Latino fatality rate increased again to 4.5 per 100,000 workers in 2020, 32% greater than the national average; that marks a 15% increase over the past decade. Of those who died in 2020, 65% were immigrants. The Black worker fatality rate of 3.5 per 100,000 workers continues to be greater than the national average.¹

However, Oregon OSHA penalties for these serious violations continue to be the lowest in the nation. In 2021 the average Oregon penalty for an injury that resulted from a serious violation was just over \$600 – 5 times less than the national average. And from an inspection due to a workplace death, Oregon's average penalty was just over \$1,000 – over 10 times less than the national OSHA penalty average.² These low penalties mean that the worst actors can commit multiple safety and health violations before the fine is significant enough to incentivize a change in behavior.

¹ https://afclcio.org/sites/default/files/2022-04/2214_DOTJ_Final_42622_nobug.pdf

² https://afclcio.org/sites/default/files/2022-04/2214_DOTJ_Final_42622_nobug.pdf

SB 592 also strengthens inspections – which we know are also an imperative component in making workplaces safer. SB 592 would trigger a comprehensive whole-workplace inspection if 3 or more violations occur within a year *or* an occupational death occurs. Currently, estimations suggest that it would take Oregon OSHA 112 years to inspect every workplace in Oregon.³ SB 592 ensures that when a death has occurred, a full inspection is done, checking that here are not related or wholly separate safety and health issues that could lead to another injury or death at the same workplace.

Unfortunately, we know that injuries and deaths take place across every industry in Oregon. SB 592 improves reporting, strengthens penalties, and helps make sure that more workplaces are safe before another injury or death occurs.

Even one worker death or injury from a preventable workplace hazard is too many and ultimately hurts the economy and our communities at large. Everyone deserves a healthy and safe workplace environment. Please do everything you can to make workplaces as safe as possible in Oregon. We encourage your support of SB 592

Respectfully,

Oriana Magnera
Energy, Climate, and Transportation Manager, Verde

³ https://aficio.org/sites/default/files/2022-04/2214_DOTJ_Final_42622_nobug.pdf