

**Testimony Submitted by
Chris Coughlin, Policy Director
Oregon Consumer Justice
To the House Committee on Business and Labor**

March 1, 2023

Regarding: Support for HB 3243

Chair Holvey, Vice-Chair Sosa, Vice-Chair Elmer, and Members of the Committee,

I appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of Oregon Consumer Justice in support of HB 3243.

Oregon Consumer Justice (OCJ) organizes, advocates, and supports litigation to advance a justice movement that puts people first, ensuring all have the freedom to thrive and equitably share in our abundance of resources. For too long, flawed systems and economic policies that favor profits over people have stood in the way of this reality, with communities of color most often experiencing the most significant harm. Strengthened through responsive and reciprocal community relationships, OCJ is building a future where financial and business transactions can be relied upon as safe and where all Oregonians know and have recourse to exercise their consumer rights.

Oregon consumers seek out and buy insurance for peace of mind. They buy insurance so they can be financially compensated if something goes wrong or to provide a financial cushion in the event of tragedy.

Unfortunately, there are bad actors within every industry. It is essential consumer protection laws are in place to help ensure safe, fair, and equitable marketplaces for Oregon consumers. HB 3243 will add the insurance industry to the long list of industries already subject to Oregon's basic consumer protection law, the Unlawful

Trade Practices Act (UTPA). Currently, the insurance industry is the *only* exempted industry.

HB 3243 prohibits insurance companies from deceiving, lying to, or otherwise defrauding their individual customers in the claims process, and well as during the sales, billing, and cancellation processes.

The bill will empower the Attorney General to protect the public by enforcing insurance laws under the UTPA. It also equips Oregonians to stand up for their consumer rights in court should an insurance company wrong them. Additionally, HB 3243 grants Oregon juries the ability to award equitable compensation for harm, when warranted.

We urge your support for HB 3243 to strengthen Oregon's Unlawful Trade Practices Act for consumers by insuring the insurance industry operates under the same set of rules as all other industries in the state.

Thank you for your consideration and your service to Oregon's communities.