



STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF SB 851-1

To: Chair Taylor, Senate Committee on Labor and Business
From: United Food and Commercial Workers Local 555
3/14/23

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

For the record, my name is Madison Walters, and I am a political liaison and a member of United Food and Commercial Workers Local 555.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on SB 851 with the -1 amendment, which aims to create protections for workers experiencing workplace bullying. UFCW Local 555 is the largest private sector labor union in Oregon. Our members come from a number of industries, including grocery, retail, food processing, manufacturing, and healthcare. We are a diverse group of workers who take pride in acting as a strong collective voice for working people.

SB 851 makes unlawful the act of workplace bullying, and incentivizes employers to take action to prevent workplace abuse, educate employees, and set up procedures to intervene and respond to acts of bullying in the workplace. Workplace bullying is the targeted psychological abuse of an employee at work— often perpetuated by hateful comments, sabotaging and undermining that employee's work, and even threatening or committing physical violence.

It is an unacceptable way to treat a human being, in or outside the workplace, but is often especially damaging to an employee because seeking employment elsewhere can be a tremendous financial burden. Roughly 79 million Americans experience workplace abuse in a given year, and of those workers, 67% of victims lose their jobs due to termination, quitting, or being transferred. That job loss translates to an average of \$350,000 of lost wages over a worker's lifetime.

Oregonians deserve to work in a safe, and supportive environment, with the knowledge that there is a process to address workplace abuse and hold those abusers accountable for their actions. By incentivizing employers to intervene in a case of workplace bullying, these issues can be addressed with the level of severity and accountability needed. And by requiring employers to develop and implement policies to prevent bullying and address complaints, hopefully we can reduce the amount of bullying incidents and give victims an avenue to advocate for themselves.

I wanted to particularly highlight section 8 of the -1 amendment, which would exempt employees under a collective bargaining agreement *so long as* that agreement has protections equal to or stronger than those in

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this measure. We are admirable of the intent here, which we believe is to set a floor of standards that unions can bargain from, creating a pathway for even stronger protections from workplace abuse. However, we just want to flag that it would be helpful to make clear that those employees have access to the same remedial avenues as non-union employees as set forth in the bill.

We are appreciative of Misty Orlando, an advocate and former member, for bringing this issue forward, and thank Senator Manning and Representative Nelson for collaborating with her to introduce this important piece of legislation. We strongly urge your aye vote.

Madison Walters,
Political Liaison,
UFCW Local 555

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