



TO: Senate Committee on Labor and Business  
FR: Ira Cuello-Martinez, PCUN  
RE: Support for SB 907

March 16, 2023

Chair Taylor, Vice Chair Bonham, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Ira Cuello-Martinez and I am the policy and advocacy director at PCUN, Oregon's Farmworker Union. PCUN works to empower farmworkers and working Latinx families and improve their working conditions through community building, organizing, and policy advocacy.

We are in strong support of SB 907 - the right to refuse dangerous work.

As you have heard from Hector, farmworkers are asked and expected to work in unsafe and dangerous conditions. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, workers in the agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting industry experienced one of the highest fatal injury rates at 20 deaths per 100,000 full-time workers, compared to a rate of 3.6 deaths per 100,000 workers for all U.S. industries in 2021.<sup>1</sup>

We have also heard from employer representatives that this bill would cause unnecessary liability for employers. However, I must remind you that this would only apply if an employer is not respecting a worker's right to refuse dangerous work. Employers who are not following the law, and placing workers at risk of serious injury, serious impairment of health, or even death should be held accountable.

In addition, the employer has the opportunity to allay the worker's concern in a number of ways. The employer could reassign the worker's job duties to something that would not lead to a serious injury or they could provide the worker with the appropriate personal protective equipment and training so that the worker is equipped with the proper equipment and knowledge to mitigate the hazard.

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<sup>1</sup> Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries Summary, 2021 <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/cfoi.nr0.htm>

I also want to remind everyone that a serious injury or death does not only have an impact on the individual worker, but it would affect their entire family who may be dependent on their income. We want to prevent further workplace injuries or deaths.

Ultimately, the bill aims to improve workplace safety by clarifying an existing rule, tying the rule to existing retaliation protections, and ensuring workers can use sick time or paid time off for any loss of wages.

We urge you to vote yes on SB 907.

Ira Cuello-Martinez  
Policy and Advocacy Director  
PCUN