

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

Climate Jobs PDX would like to express our strong support for SB 907. Climate Jobs has, for over eleven years, helped bridge the concerns of labor unions and the climate movement. Jobs with Justice, our parent organization, is a thirty year old labor- community campaign for workers' rights with over 100 labor, faith, and social justice member organizations.

Last year we participated in the stakeholder advisory group to OSHA rule making on heat and wildfire smoke, serving, in part, as a liaison between unions representing workers and the rule-making process. A critical part of that work included alerting unions and their workers of opportunities to testify to OSHA. Workers' testimony to OSHA revealed the need for protective workplace boundaries, and helped shape the best heat and smoke rules in the country. While these rules are a huge step forward and a model nation-wide, like many other worker protection rules, they cannot not address every situation where a worker's health or even life is at risk. As an example, a worker may know that, given a particular respiratory condition and the wildfire smoke conditions in a very specific site, it is not safe for her to continue working in that specific situation. In other workplace conditions, a worker may also be the only one to understand the risk of doing a very particular task when that task may pose serious risks including exposure to dangerous toxins, a fall, or an injury due to faulty equipment.

These types of protections, and clear boundaries are only going to become more essential as climate change brings ever-increasing temperatures and dangers of wildfires with smoke affecting widespread areas. We think that SB 907's approach to this inescapable fact is quite smart. Rather than placing a new set of regulations or requirements on specific industries and workplaces, it focuses directly on a worker's ability judge when a risk to their health and safety exists. Our work in the OSHA rulemaking process highlights the fact that workers are very conscious of the difference between difficult work and work that threatens their health and safety.

Supervisors and employers do not need legislation or rules to take actions that will protect their employees' health and safety. However, without SB 907, workers cannot do the same without risking their very livelihood.

SB 907 recognizes that workers are the ones who best understand - and suffer the consequences - when their worksite or work duties put their lives in danger. This legislation respects workers' right to life. It quite simply declares that workers have the right to choose their own health and safety without risking losing their job or other workplace retaliation.

The vast majority of Oregonians, and particularly the most vulnerable to dangerous work conditions, need and deserve the respect and life-sustaining protections embedded in this bill. We strongly urge you to vote YES on SB 907.

Nikki Mandell, representing
Climate Jobs
A Committee of Portland Jobs with Justice

