

Testimony in Support of SB 907

TO: Chair Taylor, Vice-Cahir Bonham, and, members of the Committee

FR: Alyssa Rueda

DT: March 16, 2023

RE: Testimony to the Senate Committee in Support of SB 907

Dear Chair Taylor, Vice-Cahir Bonham and Members of the Senate Labor and Business Committee,

I am writing to express my support for SB 907. The right of employees to refuse dangerous work. Oregon workers have a right to be safe in their jobs and if the employee believes that a job can lead to serious injury or death, they should be able to refuse. To discuss recent matters, Oregon is experiencing some serious changes in climate. Our summers are becoming excruciatingly hot. In 2020, there were at least 254 workplace complaints about the dangerous heat exposure and there were at least 3 deaths. 5-10 million workers are exposed to unsafe outdoor heat exposure levels and outdoor workers account for 20% of heat-related deaths. The summers will only continue to get hotter as the climate continues to change. We are also experiencing increasing amounts of wildfires and ice storms due to the accelerating changes of the climate. This is not to say that conditions are *now* becoming hazardous because of the climate.

Historically, farm workers and people who work outside are extremely vulnerable to toxins, harmful chemicals, heavy machinery and other hazards. Employees and employers are aware of the risks but any refusal could be met with many reprimands. Lower-income, Latine and Black workers remain at greater risk of dying on the job than all workers. Every one of these deaths can be prevented. SB 907 will ensure employees have the right to refuse dangerous work and protects the employees against any disciplinary action, retaliation, or discrimination for exercising their right. Oregon already has a rule that allows workers to refuse unsafe work but it is a right that is difficult to exercise. The Oregon Legislature must guarantee the “right to safe work” by making the existing right easier to exercise.

Thank you for your time and I strongly encourage the Senate Committee On Labor and Business to pass SB 907 to protect workers rights.

Sincerely,

Alyssa Rueda