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Public Hearing before the Senate Business and Labor Committee

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Testimony in support of SB 907-6

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

On behalf of the Oregon Law Center (OLC), thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of SB 907-6, the right to refuse hazardous work. The -6 amendment makes it clear in statute that workers are protected from retaliation if they reasonably refuse to subject themselves to workplace hazards that could seriously injure or kill them. It also directs OR OSHA to **adopt rules in accord with the federal Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970.**

OLC is a statewide non-profit organization that provides free legal help to people struggling to make ends meet. Our mission is to achieve justice for low-income communities in Oregon by providing a full range of the highest quality civil legal services. We advocate for policies that help build the economic security of our communities, and their ability to take care of themselves and their families.

On March 16, 2023, proponents, OLC included, shared before this committee that the right to refuse hazardous work already exists in federal rule since the 1970's, and in state rule. Unfortunately, our *state rule* is extremely confusing and complicated for workers to use. Our intent in bringing SB 907 was to clarify this right in our state and therefore make this right accessible to workers. We believe the -6 amendment before you sets Oregon on a path towards achieving this goal.

The -6 amendment before you is the result of a rigorous process in which proponents, business industry representatives, OR OSHA, BOLI, and our chief sponsors came together in good faith to find a path forward. On behalf of OLC, I am appreciative of the opportunity to be part of a process that was solution oriented. I appreciate all the stakeholders that came together in good faith to debate and come to a final agreement in the form of the -6 amendment.

What SB 907-6 does:

SB 907-6 makes it clear in statute that workers are protected from retaliation if they reasonably refuse to subject themselves to workplace hazards that could seriously injure or kill them. It

directs Oregon OSHA to make a rule to lay out the details regarding a protected refusal in accord with the federal OSH Act of 1970.

The right to refuse hazardous work is a basic and fundamental human right. Everyone deserves a healthy and safe work environment, and the choice to, **with no reasonable alternative and in good faith, refuse to expose themselves to serious injury or death arising from a hazardous condition at the workplace.** We respectfully urge this committee to support SB 907-6 and guarantee the “right to safe work” by making this existing right easier to exercise.

Respectfully,
Martha Sonato