

April 19th, 2023

Representative Paul Holvey, Chair and Representatives Lucetta Elmer and Nathan Sosa, Vice-Chairs
House Committee on Business and Labor
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

Chair Holvey, Vice Chairs Elmer and Sosa and members of the committee,

On behalf of the nearly 900 Professional and Technical Employees, Local 17 (PROTEC17) represented employees of City of Portland, I write today in support of SB 592 to improve worker safety and health in Oregon. PROTEC17 represents engineers, planners, information technology specialists, technicians, and other professionals who live and work in the Portland area, as well as approximately 8,000 public sector employees in other parts of the Pacific Northwest.

The goal of SB 592 is to improve current safety and health practices in order to make all workplaces in Oregon safer. By bringing Oregon OSHA penalties for serious violations, which are currently the lowest in the nation, into line with Federal OSHA penalties, the legislature will be sending a clear message that unsafe working conditions are taken seriously in this state. Unfortunately, for too long extremely low penalties for workplace violations have not sent this message strongly enough. These low penalties have even allowed the worst actors to commit multiple safety and health violations before the fine is significant enough to incentivize a change in behavior.

Additionally, SB 592 would trigger a comprehensive whole-workplace inspection if either 3 or more violations occur within a year or a work-related death occurs in connection to a violation. In the terrible event of a workplace death, SB 592 ensures that a full inspection is done, checking that there are not related or wholly separate safety and health issues that could lead to another injury or death at the same workplace.

Workplace safety should be an issue of paramount concern for all Oregonians. Worker injuries and deaths are tragic occurrences that impact all of us, and the current system of penalties is clearly not being effectively used to minimize preventable incidents. Please do everything you can to make workplaces as safe as possible in Oregon. We encourage your support of SB 592.

Sincerely,



Elliot Levin
Research Director and Legislative Advocate
PROTEC17