

Submitter: Edgar Brandt

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Business and Labor

Measure: SB907

Chair Holvey, Vice-Chairs Elmer and Sosa, and members of the Committee, for the record, my name is Edgar Brandt. I'm a retired bilingual instructional assistant with Salem-Keizer Schools and current board member of Farm Worker Ministry Northwest, a faith-based advocacy organization. I live in Dallas, Oregon.

I support SB 907 because as an educator I've worked with children of Oregonians who have suffered serious injuries on the job in conditions that never should have been allowed to occur. Further, as a volunteer at a free mobile dental clinic in Salem, I meet and talk with patients who are disabled because of job-related accident or illness.

Currently, it's difficult to exercise the right to refuse work, though state rules allow it and doing so often brings retaliation. Sadly, about 125,000 workers die in the U.S. because of workplace hazards--120,000 from occupational diseases and 4,760 from traumatic injuries. An average of 340 workers die every day and increasingly extreme weather worsens these problems.

Outdoor workers account for 20% of heat-related deaths. In the heat waves of 2020 there were 254 complaints submitted to OSHA and at least 3 heat-related deaths occurred.

SB 907 would clarify that a worker has a protected right to refuse dangerous work that could result in a serious injury or death, as long as there is no reasonable alternative and the worker acts in good faith.

This protection would be added to ORS 654.062, the anti-retaliation section of the Oregon Safe Employment Act. Direct Oregon OSHA to adopt rules in accordance with the federal Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970.

SB 907 takes a hidden existing right in an administrative rule and clarifies it in statute. It would use Oregon's rebuttable presumption to protect workers who exercise this right from retaliation.

Please vote "Yes" on SB 907. Workers are being killed in Oregon at higher rates than neighboring states. We need to give workers the option to protect themselves in dangerous workplace situations.

Thanks for considering this important matter.