



Service Employees International Union – Oregon State Council

May 11th, 2023

Chair Holvey, Vice-Chairs Elmer and Sosa, and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of Senate Bill 907A to allow workers the right to refuse dangerous work. My name is Alberto Gallegos and I am submitting this testimony on behalf of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), Oregon. SEIU Oregon is composed of SEIU Local 503 and SEIU Local 49, which together represent over 87,000 people. Local 49 represents private sector janitors, property service workers, light manufacturing, and healthcare workers; while Local 503 represents homecare workers, private nonprofit workers, in-home childcare providers, nursing home workers, and state and local government employees.

Although there are already state and federal rules in place allowing workers to refuse dangerous work, the reality of the situation is that it is often difficult for a worker to actually exercise this right due to complex language causing confusion and fear of retaliation—which is often the case. This fear and confusion has resulted in workplace hazards killing approximately 125,000 workers each year in the U.S.—4,764 from traumatic injuries and another 120,000 from occupational diseases. This averages out to 340 workers deaths each day from hazardous working conditions.

SB 907A would allow workers to refuse to do work that can cause them death, serious impairment, or serious injury— such as extreme heat or unsafe equipment—as long as there is no reasonable alternative and the employee acts in good faith. This protection would be added to ORS 654.062, the anti-retaliation section of the Oregon Safe Employment Act, and directs Oregon OSHA to adopt rules in accordance with the federal Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970.

As previously stated, there are already rules established in Oregon to allow workers to refuse dangerous work, this bill would simply clarify those rules and allow workers to properly exercise their right to protect themselves without fear of retaliation.

SEIU Oregon urges this committee to vote in support of SB 907A.

Thank you,

Alberto Gallegos
Political and Government Relations Organizer
SEIU, Oregon State Council