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February 12, 2024

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 Professional and Technical Employees, Local 17 (PROTEC17), I write today in opposition to HB 4050. PROTEC17 represents nearly 9,000 public sector employees across the Northwest, including over 1,000 engineers, planners, information technology specialists, and technicians employed by the City of Portland.

Our members are generally skilled professionals who are in high-demand technical fields. They have seen these fields diversify considerably over recent years as education and hiring pipelines have begun to provide engineers, planners and other professional employees from a wide variety of demographics and backgrounds. This has been extremely beneficial for both the quality of work product and communities our members serve. However, in a tight labor market, our members have also seen first-hand the biases that can easily slip into the awarding of bonuses and retention incentives.

Vague language around “business necessity” is exactly what the Oregon Pay Equity Act needs to protect against. The language contained within HB 4050 would open the door to the kind of discriminatory pay and favoritism that has limited workplace advancement opportunities for too long. In the public sector, our members have seen the benefits to having workforces that are more representative of their communities, and maintaining the goals of pay equity are an important step in helping employers retain diverse employees.

Sincerely,

Elliot Levin  
Research Director and Oregon Legislative Advocate