



A STRONG VOICE FOR OREGON'S WORKERS

TO: Chair Taylor
Vice-chair Bonham
Members of the Labor and Business committee
FR: Tan Perkins, Oregon AFL-CIO
RE: SB 748, Opposition

Chair Taylor, Vice Chair Bonham and members of the committee, for the record my name is Tan Perkins and I am with Oregon AFL-CIO, we represent over 300,000 workers and their families. We try to be a voice for all workers in the legislative process.

I am here today to testify against SB 748 which would allow the Oregon Department of Employment to drug test applicants for receipt of benefits. Unemployment insurance is a vital service that ensures workers continue to make ends meet during difficult periods of their lives.

This policy would do exponentially more harm than good. We know that when folks lose their jobs they are going through one of the hardest times in their lives - to add a barrier and deny social benefits could increase the on-going homelessness crisis, slip into addiction, or instigate a mental health crisis.

We do not believe that drug testing, including cannabis which is legal in this state, is a just use of state funds. When an individual applies for benefits, OED sends a form to the employer to see if the reason for separation that the individual gave matches the employer's response. This policy could empower employers to claim termination due to a drug and alcohol policy without ever having to test the individual. If the employer suspected some sort of drug activity they wouldn't have to test themselves because OED could do the testing.

Unemployment exists to help, not harm. Creating any kind of extra step to a social benefit reduces the effect. If someone is fired for drug use they need help, not punishment. We talk about the ongoing houselessness and addiction crisis in this state, and we know that treatment and assistance are the answers, not withholding vital services.

We strongly ask this committee to oppose SB 748, and to deeply consider the long term impacts this could have on people's lives and our state as a whole.