



February 18, 2025

Good morning Chair Taylor, Vice chair Bonham and members of the committee,

My name is Odalis Aguilar Aguilar and I am a political coordinator at Oregon AFSCME. Our union represents over 39,000 workers across the state in both public and private sectors and we believe in economic and social justice for all Oregon workers and their families.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of SB 606. This bill includes workers employed full time at the Oregon State Hospital and the Stabilization and Crisis Unit to the list of certain workers whose posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and acute stress disorder is presumed to be a compensable occupational disease claim.

This bill comes forward as a cry for help from the hundreds of workers employed by the state in both of the programs as a way to provide mental health support for posttraumatic stress injuries that stem from their occupations. The testimonies you will hear are from workers who have dedicated their lives to providing compassionate care for Oregon's most vulnerable and acute individuals. The individuals who many first responders face out in the field that are already included in this presumption, are the same individuals who are placed at the State Hospital in order to restore them to competency or have transitioned to the Stabilization and Crisis Unit to continue their path to recovery.

No one can deny the behavioral health crisis hitting all parts of the state, so naturally, it's the workforce that endures unintended consequences from individuals who become dysregulated. They either cause harm to themselves or others and while they continue to receive care from those workers, those same workers find themselves with little to no resources to deal with the traumatic injuries from work.

In 2022, The Department of Consumer and Business Services reports in their Survey of Occupational Injuries and Illnesses (SOII) the Oregon State Hospital to be the industry with the



highest incidence rates of total nonfatal occupational injuries and illnesses.¹ Workers compensation claims data from Jan. 2013 through Dec. 2022 at behavioral health settings across the state highlight the realities faced by workers everyday. In that report, again, the most dangerous behavioral health location for workers is Oregon State Hospital.

On July 22, 2024, the workers compensation division issued a memo where you can see the number of claims since 2016 broken out by first responders and non first responders.

- For non first responders, there were a total of 150,697 accepted disabling claims and 566 were mental health claims or 0.38% of the total number of accepted disabling claims.
- For first responders only, there were a total of 5,313 and 157 of those were mental health claims or 2.96%.

As you can see, the number of these claims given the overall workers compensation system is small, but the impact this can have on the individual's life is truly life changing. We appreciate all the feedback given from various stakeholders already and acknowledge the unique process changes to workers compensation statutes go through. We look forward to continuing this conversation when the Management and Labor Advisory Committee is able to fully meet and discuss this issue again and hope to be back with a recommendation promptly.

Thank you in advance for your consideration, your continued support and commitment for injured workers.

¹ Oregon Occupational Injury and Illness Survey Summary, Table, and Appendices Calendar Year 2022. <https://www.oregon.gov/DCBS/DCBSPubs/reports/boli-stats/occ-sum/23-2081.pdf>