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# A STRONG VOICE FOR OREGON'S WORKERS

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March 24, 2025

Chair Grayber, Vice-Chairs Elmer and Munoz and members of the House Labor and Workplace Standards committee,

The Oregon AFL-CIO represents over 300,000 workers across the state in every sector and is a voice for all workers in the legislative process. As worker advocates, we helped pass Paid Family and Medical leave to make sure that workers across Oregon are able to take the time they need without fear of losing their job and livelihood.

In 2024, SB 1515 passed to work to align Oregon's unpaid leave system, OFLA and Oregon's paid leave system, PFML. While we were neutral on the totality of the bill, in the alignment, workers unfortunately lost several key protections and options for leave and no remedy or plan was given to address these significant and sudden changes.

While the exact language in the amendment is still being worked on, HB 3491 aims to address some of those outstanding and significant issues.

First, the bill helps ensure that workers understand their rights under the new frameworks of OFLA and PFML by requiring that when a worker talks about a reason for leave or inquires about leave the employer must provide an overview of leave benefits to the worker in the language they usually communicate in. This addition helps ensure that workers understand when they might be eligible for PFML and other leave options particularly given the shift that occurred when SB 1515 passed.

Secondly, the bill works to address an issue of SB 1515 where workers used to be able to take job-protected, unpaid leave in increments shorter than 1 day under OFLA, which they are now unable to do. In practice now, workers would have to apply for, receive and take a full day off in order to go to a short regular medical appointment for themselves and their loved ones. This disproportionately impacts hourly workers since they stand to lose more of their wages proportionally. It also disproportionately impacts employers since a worker now must miss a whole day instead of just an hour or two of work.

HB 3491 begins to address this by requiring the Employment Department to study and make recommendations for how to pay increments of less than 1 day under PFML. Importantly, it also requires that they report on the impact of the lack of job protection. For example, after OFLA was diminished in SB 1515 – so under current law – a worker is not entitled to return to their job if they take an hour of unpaid leave to go to a medical appointment. This is a significant departure from the rights and protections workers had on the job prior to the passage of SB 1515, when their job was protected under the identical situation under OFLA.

Both of these changes are reasonable alterations in the aftermath of SB 1515 to protect workers and help ensure that they understand their rights. HB 3491 makes these first steps to ensure that our paid family medical leave works as intended: to help both workers and employers have healthy employees to return to work.