



March 26, 2025

Chair Grayber, Vice-chairs Elmer and Muñoz, and members of the committee,

My name is Anna Roberts, I'm a lead union organizer with SEIU Local 49. SEIU represents Oregon workers across a variety of sectors, including janitorial, industrial laundry facilities, and airport services. These are industries populated by low-income workers, many of whom are immigrants and people of color. These are also industries where employers are less flexible with work schedules, and more punitive towards workers with medical conditions that cause them to miss work, compared to many higher-income occupations.

When SB 1515 went into effect last year, it took away important protections that Oregon workers relied on to keep their job and maintain their medical insurance when facing medical crises or childbirth. For example, women with complicated pregnancies who need to take medical leave prior to the birth of their child now have that time subtracted from the time they can take to be with their new baby after birth. Prior to the implementation of SB 1515 in July of 2024, parents were given an additional 12 weeks of bonding leave, separate from disability leave, upon the birth of their child. Even women without complicated pregnancies saw the total amount of protected time they could take off after the birth of a child reduced upon implementation of SB 1515. Prior to July 2024, women could take 6 – 8 weeks of disability leave, followed by 12 weeks of bonding leave. SB 1515 reduced the total amount of protected time to 12 weeks for uncomplicated pregnancies and 14 weeks for complicated pregnancies, which must be used for both pre-birth and post-birth leave.

Another grave concern is the fact that all Oregon workers who worked for an employer with at least 25 employees in the State used to be able to use OFLA to take partial days off work for serious medical conditions. When SB 1515 took effect, this protection was taken away from most Oregon workers; workers who work for employers with less than 50 employees within a 75-mile radius, and workers at large employers who had worked for that employer for less than one year full time.

Oregon workers are losing their medical insurance and losing their jobs *today* because important protections were taken away from them in July of 2024. It's unacceptable for this to continue for an additional five to ten years. We need a restoration of the job and benefits protection that Oregon workers lost last year, now.

Restoring job and benefit protection for partial days of absence for serious medical conditions right away will not place an additional burden on employers. All Oregon employers with at least 25 employees in the state were required to provide this type of leave until July of 2024. There is no need to take time to study this restoration of benefits, since it can happen before the Oregon



Employment Department updates the Francis system to allow for payment for these partial days.

I wanted to share a few personal stories from some of the janitors I work with to illustrate the importance of the protections for partial days. These are from workers who are employed by employers large enough to qualify for Federal FMLA protections, but for the majority of Oregon workers they lost the ability to take partial days in July of 2024:

1. Victor had surgery in September of last year and was unable to return to work for two months. He now has follow-up medical care three days per week and needs to miss 2 hours of work for his appointments on those days. His employer is refusing to allow him to flex his schedule, so he has to rely on his protections under the Federal Family Medical Leave Act to take partial days off work. If he had been forced to take full days off for these appointments, he would have run out of his remaining protected leave by now and would have either been fired, or would have had to start skipping medically necessary follow-up therapy.
2. Our members' jobs are often very physical, and it is common for them to not be released for a full eight hours of work after a surgery or accident. After an injury and some initial full days off work, Silvia was released to return to work for four hours per day. Her employer didn't want to return her for partial days, but because of the protections that existed for Oregon workers prior to July of 2024, her employer was required to return her to work and allow her to take partial days off. She was able to work half days until she was fully healed and could return to full-time work. Prior to SB 1515 taking effect, working half days for a limited period of time was an option for most Oregon workers. Today it is not.
3. Ross suffers from panic attacks. These can come on during work and result in him needing to go home early. Medical appointments to address this condition result in him sometimes needing to arrive late to work. Despite submitting medical verification of his condition, his supervisor expressed suspicion about it and made several attempts to dissuade him from missing time. This included telling him that his doctor's note only excused him from entire shifts, and that if he left before his shift was over, he would be disciplined for a "leave-early." Ross was remaining on the job, sometimes hiding in the janitors closet while suffering through a panic attack, to try to keep from being disciplined. When I found out about this, I was able to tell Ross's company that this was illegal, because of the protections for partial days that still existed at that time. Because of SB 1515, today, if Ross had been working for a smaller employer, he would have either been fired for leave-earlies or forced to stay at work while suffering a mental breakdown.



Service Employees International Union – Oregon State Council

All Oregon workers should have the right to miss partial days for serious medical conditions. People in higher-income occupations may have employers who are more flexible with their work hours, and who allow them to accommodate medical appointments, or they may not have to miss work when they have physical restrictions. But the rest of the Oregon workforce needs the protections they had prior to July of 2024 to be restored.

Given the current national political climate, even the minority of Oregon workers who do qualify for FMLA protections for partial days should not have to be dependent on the whims of the federal government for their job and benefit protection.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

Anna Roberts
Lead Organizer
SEIU Local 49