



A STRONG VOICE FOR OREGON'S WORKERS

TO: Chair Bowman
Vice-chairs Elmer and Pham
Members of the House Rules Committee
FR: Catie Theisen, Oregon AFL-CIO
RE: HB 4073 Concerns

February 10, 2025

The Oregon AFL-CIO represents 300,000 workers across Oregon and is a voice for all workers in the legislative process. Thank you for the opportunity to testify with concerns on HB 4073.

Rulemaking plays a critical role in the legislative process where state agencies are required to implement legislation passed by the legislature. We agree with the proponents on their sentiment of standardizing and streamlining rulemaking wherever possible, we do have concerns that HB 4073 as written would simply change and exacerbate problems, not fix any.

State agencies are by definition the way in which state government and services function and enable policies to be implemented on the ground long after the legislators vote on a bill and it is signed into law. As we experience every session, there is a long legislative process to pass a bill with opportunity for public engagement. And legislation is specifically designed to not answer every single detail of implementation - that is what rule-making is for.

While we often share in the frustrations of that long and bureaucratic process, it's ultimately necessary to make our state run. However, HB 4073 simply adds layers of bureaucracy. In particular, the bill seems to assume that the Legislature does not consider economic effects of the legislation and that rules should be focused solely on economic impact. We'd disagree with both of these assertions. There is an extensive process to understand the fiscal impact of a bill and legislators receive public testimony and deliberate on bills. Once passed, they expect that the policies adopted will be implemented in a timely and efficient manner.

Further, the rule-making process already has a robust public comment and stakeholder feedback period where concerns can be noted and acted on if they are warranted. Pausing the rulemaking process to send a rule to the Ways and Means committee or to do another impact statement would simply add bureaucratic burden – and cost – to an unknown end besides stalling the bill's implementation.

Ultimately, state agency employees are experts in their field. They have valuable insight into how state laws can and should be implemented. There is an existing robust rule-making process where both sides are represented and often neither get exactly what they want. We know that these public servants take their jurisdictional responsibility to implement state statute very seriously. Consequently, we believe that the claim of state agencies exceeding the bounds of their authority has been significantly overstated by the proponents of this bill.

While we appreciate some of the streamlining the bill aims at, our concerns are significant with many portions of HB 4073.