



February 11, 2026

Chair Patterson and Members of the Senate Healthcare Committee,

For the record, my name is Josh Estes, and I am providing testimony on behalf of the Association of Western Pulp and Paper Workers (AWPPW) in support of SB 1529-1.

AWPPW represents working men and women employed in Oregon's pulp, paper, and forest product manufacturing facilities. Our members are frontline operators, mechanics, electricians, and skilled trades professionals who rely on stable, accessible healthcare for themselves and their families. For many of our members, employer-sponsored coverage is not simply a benefit — it is the foundation of family security.

SB 1529-1 addresses a growing structural problem within Oregon's healthcare marketplace. When disputes between insurers and providers escalate, it is working families who absorb the consequences. Delayed access to care, uncertainty in coverage, network instability, and unexpected costs are not abstract policy issues; they directly affect our members' ability to access necessary treatment and maintain financial stability.

Binding arbitration provides a mechanism to ensure disputes are resolved in a timely, structured, and predictable manner. It reduces the risk that negotiations collapse in ways that jeopardize patient access or create leverage through service disruption. For workers in rural and industrial communities, where provider networks may already be limited, continuity of care is especially critical.

From a workforce perspective, healthcare instability also impacts employers' ability to attract and retain skilled labor. Oregon's manufacturing sector operates in a competitive national and global environment. When healthcare access becomes uncertain or contentious, it undermines workforce stability and regional economic resilience.

SB 1529-1 does not eliminate negotiation. Rather, it establishes guardrails that ensure disputes ultimately reach resolution. In doing so, it protects patients, supports continuity of care, and reinforces the stability that working families depend upon.

Our members are not asking for preferential treatment. They are asking for predictability, fairness, and access. SB 1529-1 advances those principles.

On behalf of the Association of Western Pulp and Paper Workers, I respectfully urge your support of SB 1529-1 and request that the committee move this bill forward.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Joshua Estes". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Joshua Estes,

On behalf of the Association of Western Pulp and Paper Workers (AWPPW)

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