



Urban League
of Portland

MEASURE: HB 3390
EXHIBIT: 26
H BUSINESS & LABOR
DATE: 4-3-2013 PAGES: 1
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Testimony in Support of HB 3390 – Paid Sick Leave

April 3, 2013

House Committee on Health Care

Ty Schwoeffermann

Health Equity Organizer

Urban League of Portland

Chair Doherty and Member of the Committee; my name is Ty Schwoeffermann, I am the Health Equity Organizer for the Urban League of Portland and I'm here to support the bill HB 3390 that would allow most Oregon employees to earn paid sick time.

A high proportion of African Americans, 44% of women and nearly 50% of African American men— are not able to earn a single paid sick day to use to recover from common illnesses. When illness strikes, they have to risk their economic security by staying home, or their health or a family member's health by going to work.

In Multnomah County, nearly 30% of African American families live in poverty; and many of them are working poor – as 20% of Black women and 28 % of black men are underemployed. For these families, living py check to pay check losing precious income due to illness is no small matter. And even a few days of lost pay means that they may have to decides between paying the rent and buying groceries or paying their utility bill.

There is also the challenge of job retention and too many Black workers feel insecure and vulnerable at work. The Urban League believes that Earned Sick Days can provide additional job security. The risk of job loss due to a common illness or the need for routine medical care is a very real threat to African American families. The average unemployed African American worker searches nearly 10 months for a new job. The threat of job loss for taking an unsanctioned sick day is very real:

The Urban League receives calls from many of our community members who feel that they have been discriminated and victimized at work. One particular case comes to mind where a woman felt that she wasn't welcome at her work place but was determined to stay. She did everything above and beyond to appease her supervisor; but when she became so ill she had to seek emergency care and was out for two days, she was written up and eventually dismissed.

No-one should be fired, suspended, written up or penalized by an employer for taking time off from work to care for a sick child or family member, or to cope with an illness. We urge support and passage of the Earned sick Days Ordinance.

Ty Schwoeffermann