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STATE REPRESENTATIVE
DISTRICT 41
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

HB 2903
Senate Business and Transportation Committee
May 20, 2013

Chair Beyer and members of the committee,

Thank you for hearing HB 2903 today. I'm sorry I can't be at your committee meeting to present this information in person.

House Bill 2903 deals with protections for victims of domestic violence and comes to you from the House with a unanimous Aye vote. It makes two small changes to current Oregon law protecting victims of domestic violence who need time off from work to seek court, law enforcement or other protections.

When an employee is a victim of domestic violence, that presents a safety threat not only to victims, but also to co-workers and the community. It is in the best interests of victims, their children, co-workers and the community that victims be able to access the protections they need, when they need to.

For these reasons, current law provides employees who are victims with the ability to take reasonable, unpaid time off from work, if necessary, to seek court or law enforcement protections, medical care, or take other safety measures.

HB 2903 closes two gaps in the current protections:

It closes a gap in coverage, by extending coverage to part-time and new employees, so that they can access help if they need it.

It adds information about the availability of the leave to the notices posted by employers in break rooms and other locations.

We must ensure that victims of violence know they can take leave from work to get the protection they need without fear of losing their jobs. This is true regardless of how long the victim has worked for the employer.

The bill is fair to employers:

It does not change the current employer size limit or the current exemption for undue hardship.

Leave must be reasonable. It can be limited if it would cause hardship for the employer, and is only allowed for specific health and safety purposes.

Employers may ask for documentation of eligibility.

Posters are downloadable for free from the BOLI website, and hard copies are made available to employers upon request.

And, I'd like to add, that business organizations were present at the House Human Services Committee hearing and testified in SUPPORT of this measure.

This bill is good policy for victims, employers, co-workers, and the state. When victims need safety, time is of the essence. This bill will reduce barriers to safety for victims and will increase workplace safety for all employees.

I urge you to send HB 2903 to the Senate floor with a Do Pass recommendation.