



Testimony in Support of HB 3390 -2 Amendments

Wednesday, June 5, 2013

Susan E. King, MS, RN, CEN, FAAN

Executive Director of the Oregon Nurses Association

Chair Garrett and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of HB 3390's -2 amendments on behalf of Oregon Nurses Association (ONA). In addition to my role as an administrator and employer of 45 staff members at the Oregon Nurses Association, I practice as an emergency department nurse in a large hospital.

ONA is both a professional association and a labor union, representing nearly 13,000 registered nurses, advanced practice nurses, and nursing students in Oregon. ONA's members are nurses whose practice is focused on assisting people in recovering from illness and more importantly promoting good health and preventing sickness. As a result, ONA has a long history of advocating for public policies—like earned sick leave—that improve the lives of the patients we serve.

Many working Oregonians do not have access to sick leave when they need time to recover from an illness. For many workers, especially those who earn low wages, this significantly increases the odds that they will have to choose go to work sick for risk of losing wages, or even their job. When workers go to work sick, not only do they delay their own recovery, they also put their co-workers and members of the public at risk of being exposed to and infected by contagious illnesses like the flu.

As an employer, I fully understand both the financial and productivity impacts of employee absence due to illness. However, offering paid sick leave, which ONA has done for decades, achieves a more important goal than the effects of short term interruption in our work. That goal is to adhere to the evidence for public health measures that prevent transmission of disease.

This last flu season and recent cases of Norovirus in the Portland area have brought a heightened awareness to this issue and are clear reminders that we all get sick from time to time. With highly contagious illnesses like these, the best intervention is to prevent exposure by staying away from others when sick. Unfortunately, not everyone in Oregon can stay home to recover when they are sick. Their lack of sick leave affects us all.

Thank you for your consideration of this public health proposal. I urge your support of HB 3390 with the -2 amendments.