

OREGON LAW CENTER

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**Testimony in Support of House Bill 4010
Before the House Business and Labor Committee
February 3, 2014**

Chair Doherty, Vice-Chairs Barton and Kennemer, and members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Oregon Law Center (OLC), I submit this testimony in support of HB 4010, which would authorize the Employment Department to make all decisions of the Employment Appeals Board public. Thank you for your work, and for the opportunity to submit written testimony this morning.

OLC's mission is to achieve justice for low-income vulnerable populations. In furtherance of this mission, OLC often works with low-income individuals struggling to navigate the unemployment benefits system. We represent clients in administrative hearings related to eligibility for benefits, and advise eligible clients regarding the merits of their cases. In many cases, our attorneys draft written arguments to the Employment Appeals Board.

One important resource in properly advising and representing clients is the published database of searchable EAB decisions. These decisions provide important information about the EAB's interpretation and application of relevant law. Until recently, this resource helped inform representatives of employees as well as employers in determining the strengths and weaknesses of a particular case.

When the decision was made that the EAB could no longer make this database available, it became much more difficult for both sides to manage cases and advise clients. Without this database, the only cases available for review are the reported cases at the Oregon Court of Appeals or Supreme Court. There are very few appeals of EAB decisions, and therefore relatively few appellate cases. Those that do exist are relatively dated.

The EAB decision database provides a current and thorough source of information about unemployment insurance decisions that is important to employers, employees, and the public in understanding and interpreting relevant law. Providing access to the decision database will facilitate effective management and settlement of cases, and effective advice and representation of individuals as well as employers. For these reasons, OLC urges passage of HB 4010, and we appreciate the attention of the Department and the committee in bringing this bill forward.

Sincerely,

Sybil Hebb