



Tom Chamberlain, *President*
Barbara Byrd, *Secretary-Treasurer*

3645 SE 32nd Ave,
Portland, OR 97202
www.oraficio.org

503-232-1195

afl-cio@oraficio.org

To: Chair Dembrow and Chair Holvey
Members of the Senate Committee on Workforce
Members of the House Committee on Business and Labor

Fr: The Oregon AFL-CIO

Re: ***Support for SB 454 and HB 2005***

February 16, 2015

On behalf of the 300,000 working Oregonians of the Oregon AFL-CIO, we are pleased to encourage your support for SB 454 and HB 2005, providing access to paid sick time for all workers in the state. The 2015 Oregon Legislature, in the midst of an economic recovery that by some standards shows our state on improving and firm footing, has an opportunity to look a little harder at who is getting left behind by this “recovery” and what it can do about it.

We know that today’s economy in Oregon looks much different than our pre-Recession economy and this point is highlighted in no better way than by the sheer numbers of workers on public assistance and in low-wage, no-benefit jobs. There are over 400,000 Oregonians doing low-wage work (\$12 per hour and under), roughly 25% of the state’s workforce. Unfortunately, these workers also have little access to benefits that allow them to care for their families or stay home when they are sick. This is a trend we’ve been seeing for several years now as many good-paying jobs have disappeared from our state and they are being replaced by these types of low-wage jobs in the service, retail, food service and health care support sectors.

A vitally important step this Legislature can take to improve the lives of hundreds of thousands of workers that are getting left behind by this recovery is to provide the ability for them to access paid sick time. Currently in these low-wage, no-benefit jobs workers are forced to go to work sick regardless of the risk of infecting others and the reduced productivity that naturally comes along with being ill. By creating an economic environment where workers feel valued and are able to utilize basic benefits like paid sick time, morale improves and costly turnover rates are reduced.

SB 454 and HB 2005 are two important bills that this Oregon Legislature can pass to send a strong signal to working Oregonians that they are valued and are a vital part of what makes our economy strong.

Thank you for your time and consideration.