

Chair Holvey and Members of the Committee,

My Name is Alene MacDonald and I have been working in the adult entertainment business since 1998. I've performed at venues all over the western U.S. and Oregon.

Adult Entertainment has been my primary source of income and my career. I have worked as an employee and as an independent contractor in this industry. Both have their advantages and drawbacks, and I have no preference for one type of designation over the other. Prior to becoming an adult entertainer I worked in restaurants and retail sales, rising to the position of store manager of a clothing retailer. I had experience with running a business, hiring and firing employees and keeping books for a retail-clothing store. My retail career came to an end when the shop owner I worked for retired and closed his shop. This is when I became an adult entertainer.

My first experience as an adult entertainer was a positive one. I was an employee dancer and the club owner was very good about making sure no laws were violated in her establishment. But as I expanded my career, I learned that a lot of abuse and neglect occurred. I've incurred injuries due to known building maintenance issues within the buildings. I've seen performers who have battled MRSA and been exposed to black mold in buildings with extreme levels of deferred maintenance. I've seen stages made out of unfinished plywood that were obviously not level, and I've seen dancing poles fall out of their housing while a performer was using the pole, causing injury to the performer.

Adult entertainers are well aware of the social stigma surrounding their profession, as are club owners and managers. This leaves an opening for unethical business owners to abuse their workers in the form of employee-level control of performances without employee protections like workman's comp or unemployment insurance. Oftentimes I would encounter a club owner or manager who had a "no breaks" rule for dancers. I've also encountered mandatory schedules, control over costuming at the performer's personal expense, being forced to promote the club without compensation on off hours, and borderline extortion by club staff demanding "tips" for continued ability to work at that club.

The Adult Entertainment industry can be a wonderful opportunity for a woman to finance her college education due to the high potential earnings and flexible working hours. But there is a darker side where some unethical club owners and operators will take advantage of the stigmatization that goes along with the industry. When the entertainers don't have information readily available to them as to what their rights are as an employee or independent contractor, it can be difficult to gain reliable information as to what the law actually provides for both employees and independent contractors.

Since most adult entertainers in Oregon work as independent contractors, there are no requirements to place the posters for employee wage and labor rights in the entertainer's locker rooms. Mostly, what you'll find are signs stating how an entertainer can be reprimanded through behaviors the club deems inappropriate. Often times, this includes

“fines.” These fines are up to the owner or manager to determine what an offense is and how much the fine should be.

This is a problem that is endemic to the industry, and not merely a uniquely Oregon problem. The bills being proposed, although seemingly small measures, will go a long way to preventing abuses in the industry. As an adult entertainer, the normal support channels of information are usually cut off due to the inability of the workers to have frank workplace conversations with friends and family outside of the industry. The trusted people whom I would normally count on for advice, cannot be accessed due to industry stigmatization.

Oregon is well known for its adult entertainment venues. Many tourist dollars flow through the state thanks to these businesses. The people who work in these businesses should have at least a minimal expectation of workplace safety and freedom from abuses by owners and managers. Please help close this worker safety loophole by passing HB 3059 into law.

Thank you,
Alene MacDonald
Milwaukie, Oregon