



March 16, 2015

Chair Greenlick, Members of the House Committee on Health Care:

On behalf of the 65,000 members of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Locals 503 and 49, we urge you to pass HB 2600.

Combined, SEIU is the largest union in the state representing public and private sector workers, in homecare, hospital care, janitorial and state agencies throughout Oregon. Our mission as a union is to improve the quality of life for our members, their families, and dependents by achieving a higher standard of living, by elevating their social conditions, and by striving to create a more just society.

Many of our members struggle to pay their premiums and meet their cost share for their health insurance coverage. When a worker or a family gets sick, it is a struggle to figure out who will care for the person while missing time away from work and potentially losing wages. This is not a decision our members ever take lightly. Therefore, losing one's health insurance due to an absence from work would be a heavier burden for the family unit a time when our workers can least afford the stress and a loss of health insurance coverage.

Currently, an employer can force an employee to pay 100% of their own health insurance costs while an employee is on Oregon Family Medical Leave Act (OFLA) leave (usually done through COBRA) or can drop an employee's health insurance altogether if the employee cannot cover this additional cost. Many of our members struggle to pay their premiums when they are working and this additional burden when the worker or a family member is sick is an additional expense that could send many of our members into financial ruin or risk avoiding medical treatment.

HB 2600 would ensure that all companies with 25 or more employees continue group health insurance coverage for the individual and covered family members. This bill would bring Oregon's OFLA in line with the federal FMLA leave policy.

SEIU urges your yes vote on HB 2600.

Felisa Hagins, Political Director
SEIU Local 49

Melissa Unger, Political Director
SEIU Local 503