

April 8, 2015

Chair Dembrow and Members of the Senate Committee on Workforce,

My name is Will Music. I've been an employee of Fred Meyers for about 9 years. During this time I have had a daughter, gotten married and just recently had a son who is now 7 months old. For many years I have also been the main provider for my family. Because I have worked for so long, I have access to health, dental, and vision insurance for my family. A few years ago I negotiated with my work to bump up my hour designation from a part time 12, to a part time 20. I did this to insure that I would always have access to health care for my family and soon to be newborn son. Even though I am not technically a full time employee, I used to consistently work about 32 hours a week, mostly due to my seniority guaranteed to me by my union. For many years these consistent hours allowed me access to a comfortable lifestyle and maintain the benefits I had earned through my years of service. Just recently, I took a leave of absence to spend some bonding time with my son. During that time a new scheduling system was implemented, and several new employees were hired. After returning from my leave, my hours looked drastically different. As a result of all the new scheduling system, and new employees the company had hired, everyone's hours have been reduced. I'm now struggling to maintain 20 hours a week, the minimum needed to keep my insurance. I have had my insurance temporarily revoked twice now because of these new scheduling practices, just in the last 7 months. After making a difficult decision, we decided for my wife to go to work full time while I stayed home to take care of the kids and work part time to try and at least keep my health benefits. After making new arrangements with my work on when my new available hours would be, I realized that they were only scheduling me about 14-16 hours a week, less than what I need to keep health benefits for my family; most importantly my newborn son. When I asked my bosses why this was, they informed me that they did not have the hours available to give me that fit with my available hours, even though other employees were being scheduled hours I could work. Because of these reduced hours my family is now on WIC and SNAP. Something we were able to avoid before they implemented this new scheduling system. I'm a proud man, raised with very traditional values. I have worked consistently since I was 15 years old; half of the life I've lived. I've worked hard so my wife could raise our children, I don't want to accept these state handouts. However, I wouldn't have to if my company scheduled me the hours, and gave me the benefits I think I've earned after working there for almost a decade. I don't want the state helping me support my family. I need the company that I've worked for almost a decade for, the one individual store that makes over a billion dollars in a year to just allow me to do what I want to do; earn a living.

I strongly encourage this Committee to support SB 845 and send a message that taxpayers shouldn't be forced to pick up the tab for workers' healthcare when an employer refuses to provide it.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.