



CITY OF
PORTLAND, OREGON

Charlie Hales, Mayor
Amanda Fritz, Commissioner
Nick Fish, Commissioner
Dan Saltzman, Commissioner
Steve Novick, Commissioner

April 20, 2015

Senator Michael Dembrow, Chair
Senate Committee on Workforce
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court St. NE, Hearing Room C
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Chair Dembrow and Members of the Committee:

We write to express strong opposition to SB 814, which preempts all charter and statutory authority of local governments to establish any employment benefit requirements for private employers.

SB 814 is overly broad and unnecessarily jeopardizes important employment protections and benefits for workers in Portland, including Portland's earned sick leave ordinance that has been in effect for well over a year.

The legislation fails to recognize that local communities have long been early adopters of legislation intended to protect communities at risk of discrimination under state and federal laws. In 1991, the City of Portland added sexual orientation or source of income in housing, employment, and public accommodations to the city's civil rights ordinance, which meant that private employers in Portland could not discriminate against their employees. Several cities about counties followed suit to offer the same protections to their communities. In 2000, gender identity was added to Portland's civil rights ordinance – the first such protections for transgender people in Oregon. Under the bill under consideration today, LGBT people in our community would have been without basic civil rights protections for nearly 18 years before similar State employment protections took effect in 2008.

The broad preemptive language of this bill intrudes not only on local laws designed to provide critical workplace protections, but could potentially interfere with the City's ability to require city contractors to establish certain minimum protections as a condition of doing business with the city. Programs such as the city's apprenticeship training program and the Minority, Women, and Emerging Small Business (MWESB) program could be swept into the broad characterizations under this bill of "employment benefits" and therefore not allowed under this legislation. These programs increase opportunities for family wage jobs in the construction trades for historically disadvantaged communities.

The City of Portland should maintain the ability to require certain employment benefits demanded by our communities. SB 814 is a substantial overreach into local decision-making that has been, and should continue to be, a force for innovation and progress in public policy.

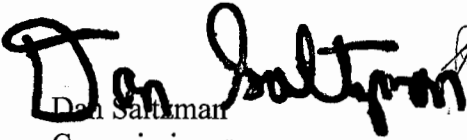
Thank you for your consideration. We urge your opposition to SB 814.

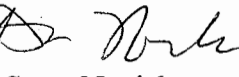
Sincerely,


Charlie Hales
Mayor


Amanda Fritz
Commissioner


Nick Fish
Commissioner


Don Saltman
Commissioner


Steve Novick
Commissioner