



April 27, 2015

The Honorable Michael Dembrow, Chair
Senate Committee on Workforce

RE: HB 2544 related to binding arbitration

Chair Dembrow and members of the committee:

Thank you for accepting my testimony on HB 2544, which would require binding arbitration for unresolved mid-term collective bargaining issues in strike permitted units.

HB 2544 would significantly impact collective bargaining in the State of Oregon by changing the Public Employee Collective Bargaining Act which could lead to an increase in the cost and frequency of bargaining when including binding arbitration. This would result in an increased workload for the State of Oregon Employee Relations Board and decreased labor relations stability across the State. We believe that the current system is in the best interest of our organization, our employees, and the public we serve.

Currently, interim bargaining allows the employer to negotiate in good faith with our unions over issues that arise that are important to them. Following the specified process, we can implement the proposed change after the bargaining process is complete. The implementation of allowing mid-term binding arbitration could result in shorter contracts and a significant expense and time delay when entering into arbitration on issues that would more appropriately be decided through collaborative interim bargaining. In addition, a binding arbitration process would be lengthy and costly while potentially adversely impacting our relationship with our workforce.

We urge you to consider a NO vote on HB 2544. Alternately, we urge you to seek compromise on this legislation by requiring mediation as part of the mid-term process for strike permitted units. This would still significantly lengthen the mid-term process and result in an increased workload for ERB mediators, however it would not create the cost factors associated with interest arbitration and would be less likely to result in shorter contracts.

Sincerely,

Alana M. Holmes, J.D., PHR, IPMA-CP
Human Resources Director
City of Eugene