



Testimony in Opposition to SB 1594

Chris Hewitt

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Chair Dembrow and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony on Senate Bill 1594. My name is Chris Hewitt and I am here on behalf of the Oregon Nurses Association in opposition to this bill. With over 14,000 members working in every healthcare setting imaginable, ONA nurses remain committed to helping ensure that our state effectively fulfill and preserve the fundamental purpose behind the established paid sick leave law for our state's working families.

SB 1594 amounts to an undue rollback of the recently enacted sick time legislation that our coalition and worker's across the state fought hard to pass this last session. This law has already begun allowing workers to accrue paid sick time from their employers, preventing them from being forced to go to work sick and risk spreading illness further both to coworkers and the public.

SB 1594 represents a step backwards for this important public policy, having the net effect of allowing employers on public works projects to deduct from an employee's compensation package the value of paid sick time, shifting earned leave costs onto the employee. ONA is deeply concerned about this measure as it cuts against the fundamental intent of paid sick time, excluding certain workers from statute and threatening good public health outcomes that are to be achieved by the existing law.

The Department of Labor finds that workers with earned sick days policies are 28 percent less likely to be injured on the job and are also able to recover faster from illness when they have access to the care and rest they need. ONA strongly believes our state should not be acting to heighten risk and uncertainty in workers' health on the job, especially in instances where public money is being used to fund projects wherein this bill seeks to undercut benefits.

Oregon's nurses play a vital role in working throughout our state to provide strong patient care and public health in our communities. Yet, fulfilling the promise of quality health outcomes is undermined and made that much more challenging when healthy lifestyles are not fostered by safeguarding good public policy like earned sick days. Paid sick leave must remain inclusive for workers in all sectors in order for families to continue having a fair chance at good health. **ONA urges you to oppose SB 1594 and preserve sick days for all in our state.**