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February 16, 2016

Testimony in Opposition to SB 1594
Senate Workforce and General Government Committee
Submitted by Andrea Paluso, Family Forward Oregon

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in opposition to exempting employees on prevailing wage projects from accruing and using sick days as a standard benefit. Family Forward is an organization committed to advancing policies that support families and helping them succeed, both in the workplace and at home. Our mission is to create a family-forward Oregon where all families can be economically secure and have the time it takes for work and family responsibilities. Today, too many families are forced to sacrifice one or the other. Family Forward supports policies, like sick days.

Our coalition and Oregonians across the state worked hard during campaigns in Portland, Eugene and over the 2013-2015 sessions, eventually passing a strong and inclusive paid sick time law for Oregon workers. Thank you Senators for your hard work that has, as of January, allowed hundreds of thousands of workers in our state to earn and use sick time. The sick days law ensures that workers are able to take paid time off when they or a family member are ill. This is an important public health measure and a right that all workers in Oregon should be entitled to, and indeed, now are.

We are opposed to any changes to the new sick time law that roll back protections for workers. We are opposed to SB 1594 because it rolls back paid days and forces employees on public works projects to pay for the cost of their own sick time. We see this as a substantive policy change and not simply a "technical fix." Oregonians have waited far too long and worked far too hard to get this basic right. What does it say to workers in our state, regardless of where they work, who have just started earning sick time that those rights may be taken away from them. Exempting an employee on a public works project or any other worker goes against the principles of public health, equity and basic dignity on which this historic law is based.

SB 1594 goes against the intent of the sick time law. Allowing employers to deduct the value of sick time from an employee's compensation package is essentially requiring employees to pay for their own sick time. Construction workers on public works projects, as much as any other worker, should not be incentivized to go to work sick because they have to pay for their own sick time- currently something no other worker in our state would have to do.



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What will the many workers who have already started accruing this time do if this right is repealed? Would they have to pay back their employer for any sick time used if this were to become law? What message does this send to hard working Oregonians and the families who rely on them?

Family Forward does not support any rollbacks to sick time nor do we see any legislation that has the net effect of taking sick time away from *any* worker as a technical fix.