



February 16, 2016

RE: In Support of SB 1598

Chair Lininger and Chair Burdick, Members of the Committee -

For the record, my name is Beth Cooke and I am here on behalf of United Food and Commercial Workers Union Local 555. I am here to testify in support of the -6 and -7 Amendments to SB1598.

Our union is founded on workers empowering workers to unite and find their voice. Nationally we are made up of more than 1.3 million people. We are a diverse group of workers that have grown into being the largest private sector labor union in Oregon.

Our members support the development of Oregon's marijuana industry. In 2015, the Legislature allowed for the development of a marijuana handlers' permit, but only for those workers in the retail stores. We are asking that this permit be expanded to all workers within the industry and that the committee adopt the -6 amendment to SB1598. Given that the industry is new and still under tremendous scrutiny, we feel that it is important for all workers to have the training that the handlers permit will provide.

As we testified last session, our members also support the development of a merit-based licensing systems for the retail marijuana industry. A merit-based application system would not cap the number of licenses allowed, but would provide that applicants would need to meet certain requirements before earning a license. For instance, meeting criteria such as previous successful involvement within the medical marijuana system under the Oregon Health Authority with no violations within the past 24 months, having Oregon-based capital, providing community-based, benefits, an environmental plan, consumer protections, etc. could be measures included in such a system. In 2015 the committee allowed for the development of such a system by the Oregon Liquor Control Commission, but no action was taken. We now urge the committee to make such a system mandatory by adopting the -7 Amendment to SB1598.

Our members have great hope for the development of this industry and feel it should be one that provides benefits to its workers and our communities. We feel the -6 and -7 amendments to SB 1598 will help further these efforts. We urge you to adopt these amendments and to support SB 1598.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Beth Cooke
UFCW Local 555