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March 29, 2017

Testimony in Opposition to SB 984: Overtime for manufacturing workers
Senate Committee on Workforce
Kate Newhall, Family Forward Oregon

Thank you for the opportunity to testify against SB 984, which would limit overtime protections for workers in manufacturing. We see this bill as an unnecessary limitation on existing workplace protections that go beyond issues of just wages and pay; if passed, SB 984 could also jeopardize the on-the-job safety for manufacturing workers, one of the more dangerous occupations in the state.

Interestingly, Oregon's first overtime laws and minimum wage laws were enacted to protect women from overwork and ensure their wages were sufficient to provide for their families. The original law limited women to working no more than 10 hours a day in order to protect their health and well-being; it was amended in 1914 to require overtime be paid to women after 9 hours in a single day.¹ This piece of history demonstrates a long-time recognition that extremely long working long hours aren't healthy or good for anybody. Today, daily overtime and maximum work hours only exist for manufacturing workers, but are still very much intended to help protect their safety and discourage workdays longer than 10 hours. Despite arguments to the contrary, the amount of overtime a manufacturing worker can earn is pretty limited: they are prohibited from working more than 13 hours in a single day and most are also precluded from working more than 48 hours in a week. And that's a good thing.

Daily overtime laws and maximum working hours are a basic health and safety issue. We know that tired and exhausted workers not nearly as productive as rested workers, but we also know they are more prone to accidents and injury. And this isn't unique to manufacturing workers, it's hard for anybody to work 10, 11 or 12 hours a day.

Instead of looking to weaken daily overtime protections as proposed in SB 984, we should be looking to expand daily overtime requirements for all workers. Nobody should be required to work more than 10 hours in a day, but if that happens, they should be paid a premium, in every industry sector. At present, three states, California, Alaska and Nevada, and Puerto Rico have daily overtime requirements that require time and a half be paid for hours worked beyond 8 hours in a single day. Colorado requires overtime for more than 12 hours worked in a single day.² Family Forward opposes SB 984, but would welcome a conversation about daily overtime modernization and protecting all workers from overly long working hours.

Don't roll back overtime protections for manufacturing workers. Please oppose SB 984.

¹ https://www.oregon.gov/boli/docs/boli_history_final_rev.pdf

² <http://www.ncsl.org/research/labor-and-employment/state-overtime-requirements.aspx>