



March 30, 2017

To: Chair Taylor and Members of the Senate Workforce Committee

Fr: Matt Swanson, SEIU Oregon State Council

Re: Concerns with Senate Bill 984

Oregon has a long and rich history with laws protecting workers, including passing the nation's first enforceable minimum wage law, to ground breaking protections of women in the workplace. In fact it was the Muller v. Oregon case, protecting women from working more than 10 hours per day in factories and laundries that established important case law protecting workers from exploitative scheduling practices at the turn of the 20th century¹. This case was an example of Oregon pioneering laws to protect the social and economic health of her workers.

The Service Employees International Union represents hundreds of workers in industrial laundries throughout the state of Oregon. The majority of laundry workers in our union are immigrant working women who labor everyday in difficult conditions. Laundry workers face extreme heat, dangerous chemicals, physically demanding work that can take a toll on their bodies after a long day of work. In fact, in addition to manufacturing workers, our union represents a number of workers in professions like janitorial and health care that also have long hours and physically demanding tasks.

It is this experience that makes us concerned about the intent of Senate Bill 984. Overtime statutes such as those at issue in this bill were passed in order to protect workers by making manual labor over 10 hours come at a premium.² The goal in these statutes is to ensure that workers are productive, safe and healthy. The legislature recognized this when passing statutes that limited standard shifts in manual labor.

Recent clarification from the Bureau of Labor and Industries suggests that both daily overtime (an important protection in manufacturing settings) and weekly overtime should be considered payable to workers when they exceed daily overtime during weeks they are scheduled or working more than 40 hours. These limits are there in order to protect workers in positions that require difficult physical labor.

This premium exists because it is in those hours that exhausted workers could be at a higher risk for injury or accidents. We believe that this impacts productivity as well as the long-term health of workers.

We are always willing to discuss these important protections for workers, in fact there are many positions that deserve additional considerations for daily overtime due to the nature of their work. What is clear, however, is that decades of public policy reflect the value of putting some work hours at a premium because of the risk to the health, safety and productivity of the workforce.

¹ **Muller v. Oregon**, 208 U.S. 412 (1908)

² ORS 652.020, ORS 653.265

It is our understanding that proponents are still in the process of drafting amendments to clarify the purpose of Senate Bill 984, we hope to continue to evaluate this proposal. At this time we wish to express our concerns that this piece of legislation could roll back important protections for workers in manufacturing settings.

Sincerely,

Matt Swanson
Executive Director