



March 30, 2017

Chair Laurie Monnes Anderson
Senate Committee on Health Care
900 Court St. - State Capitol
Salem, OR 97301

Chair Monnes Anderson and members of the Committee:

My name is Stacy Cowan and I am with SEIU Local 503. We represent 60,000 Oregonians doing more than 500 different jobs in 85 state, local government and non-profit agencies and care facilities. I would like to provide testimony in support of SB 997.

Many Oregonians are working hard but not getting ahead, and families across Oregon are struggling to make ends meet. At the same time, the country's largest corporations are reporting record profits. Additionally, Oregon is 50th in the nation for corporate tax collection.

Just this morning we heard from the DHS Self Sufficiency Director in the Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Human Services that even with record low unemployment of 4.9% in 2016, Oregonians are not leaving poverty. In fact, the poverty rate for 2016 is higher than it was in 2007 and 2009.

Over 400,000 Oregonians are employed in low-wage work with an annual median income of \$25,000. In many areas of the state where unemployment remains high after the recession, most of the job openings are for low-wage, part-time work. (*High Cost of Low Wages, 2014*)

The cost of providing assistance to working Oregonians is high—according to a 2014 report taxpayers subsidize corporations' reliance on a low-wage workforce to the tune of \$1.7 billion a year.

Most of the workers on public assistance are employed in four major sectors: Accommodation and Food Service; Retail Trade; Health Care and Social Assistance; and Administrative and Waste Services. Further, most employers in the sectors employing workers receiving public assistance are large, profitable corporations.

SB 997 closes a costly loophole which will save taxpayers money by holding employers accountable for taking advantage of taxpayer-funded health care assistance programs. SB 997 will raise an estimated \$60

SERVICE EMPLOYEES
INTERNATIONAL UNION
LOCAL 503

PO Box 12159
Salem, OR 97309-1259

1730 Commercial St. SE
Salem, OR 97302

6401 SE Foster Rd.
Portland, OR 97206

1.800.452.2146
www.seiu503.org

million over the biennium, which will help the Oregon Health Authority fund critical medical services across the state.