



April 12, 2017

To: Chair Taylor and Members of the Senate Workforce Committee

Fr: Matt Swanson, SEIU Oregon State Council

Re: Opposition to Senate Bill 999

On behalf of the more than 60,000 members of the Service Employees International Unions Local 49 and 503 in the state of Oregon we urge your opposition to Senate Bill 999. We do so because the legislation before you would severally limit the ability of working Oregonians to receive justice when they have been wronged by an employer.

Senate Bill 999 is a confusing attempt to limit employer exposure to employment law-related claims made by workers. In some cases this legislation appears to remove all remedies when a worker has been wronged by precluding certain claims from being brought together for multiple violations of the law. We cannot understand why this would be the goal of the legislation, but strongly object.

For instance, if an employee has not been paid overtime, had an unlawful deduction and did not receive a final check in a timely manner, they could not receive remedies for each these violations according to our understanding of this bill. It appears that this legislation limits the ability of workers to pursue remedies in cases where multiple violations of wage and hour law exist. We fundamentally disagree with the premise that such an approach will improve labor relations in Oregon or ensure that wronged workers will receive justice.

It is just wrong to believe that a worker who has been shortchanged in multiple ways should be limited from pursuing justice for all these transgressions. Stripping away penalties will only allow bad actors to pursue low road strategies that violate the law at the expense of workers because the penalties are not sufficient.

Workers in Oregon work hard for their pay and deserve to receive everything that they are owed. We believe that there should be meaningful penalties associated with non-payment of wages, violations of overtime law, meal and rest periods, unlawful deductions and the like.

This is not an idea that the committee should support, we urge a no vote.

Thank you,

Matt Swanson
Executive Director