

May 12, 2017

Senator Arnie Roblan, Chair
Senate Committee on Education
900 Court Street NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

Chair Roblan and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the over 825 City of Portland employees represented by the Professional and Technical Employees (PTE) Local 17, I write today in support of House Bill 3170.

In addition to our Oregon members, PTE Local 17 represents approximately 8,000 employees across Washington State, which is one of 17 states that fully permits all supervising public employees to collectively bargain with their employer. For decades, we have had supervisors in bargaining units both in the same and separate contracts from the employees they supervise. These mid-level supervisory employees are valued members of our union, and they bring important knowledge and skills to our organization that can be a benefit to labor-management relations during complex decision making processes.

The question of conflict of interest between employees is inevitably raised by the presence of supervisors in a bargaining unit. After decades of representing supervisors, it is our experience that conflicts are infrequent and, in most cases, can be simply resolved through splitting representational duties between multiple staff members. In fact, this is a situation that we already must resolve between internal workplace conflict regardless of supervisory status. Therefore, the inclusion or exclusion of supervisors does not make a significant difference in the prevalence of these types of conflicts.

By extending basic collective bargaining rights to some university staff who have been considered supervisors, HB 3170 is a positive step forward. Collective bargaining rights are an important freedom, and we believe denying these rights should be done only in critical circumstances that would jeopardize an employers' functioning. PTE Local 17 believes HB 3170 poises no such risk to employers or labor relations, and we hope that you will join us with your support.

Sincerely,



Elliot Levin
Research Director and Legislative Advocate
Professional and Technical Employees Local 17

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