

Testimony in Support of HB 4123

Chair Holvey and members of the House Business and Labor Committee, Oregon AFSCME asks you to support HB 4123. At the end of last session when the legislature eliminated the ability for a married couple to both be covered by the Public Employee Benefits board or the Oregon Educators Benefit Board we strongly opposed. We believe that the lack of a hearing about the provision and the lack of notice of the change to members' benefits were unfair and unwise. There was very little analysis about how much of a budget impact would be versus the burden it would put on members and their families. Our members have spoken loudly to us at the close of session and over the subsequent months that this unfairly targets members that are married to other state workers and those with medically fragile children. Many state workers take lower compensation for state work than they could make in the private sector based on the benefits they receive. They rely on those benefits. This change affected their families and in some cases a great deal.

We acknowledge that this does not affect every member but that is also part of our concern. Members feel that there is a fundamental unfairness if they spouse is working at a county or a city they can continue to be double covered but if their spouse works for the state they are paying a penalty. The way in which the law was passed however, does impact our entire membership. If a benefit reduction can be passed in the legislature without a hearing or a complete analysis then all of our benefits are at risk.

HB 4123 would protect current works and those hired before the bill takes effect in 2020. This allows those that have made assumption about their benefits the ability to know those are still in place through their careers. The bill also allows the children of a married couple to continue to be double covered. This protects the families of our members from one of the major concerns that we heard after the 2017 bill passed that medically fragile children could put an unfair burden on public employee families that took their jobs primarily for the quality health benefits. Please support HB 4123.

Respectfully Submitted

Joe Baessler

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Oregon AFSCME