

SB 1559 B STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

House Committee On Rules

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Meeting Dates: 3/3

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Modifies whistleblower protections to require four public employers to pilot a program allowing for anonymous reports until January 2, 2021: the Oregon Health Authority and Departments of Transportation, Human Services, and Environmental Quality. Requires Bureau of Labor and Industries (BOLI) to develop a manual of uniform standards and procedures. Directs BOLI and the identified agencies to collect and compile specified data and submit a written report to the Governor and the legislature by January 1st of each odd-numbered year.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Development and provisions of the measure

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

No amendment.

BACKGROUND:

"Whistleblowers" are employees, typically public employees, who report questionable conduct or activity by their employer, and by doing so, put themselves at risk of retaliation by the employer: discharge, demotion, or some other adverse decision with regard to compensation or terms of employment. Congress initially addressed whistleblower rights and protections for federal employees as part of the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978, and has strengthened those protections over time. Every state in the nation has since enacted statutory whistleblower protections for public employees, including Oregon, and a handful of states have extended protections to private employees.

Senate Bill 1559-B requires the Bureau of Labor and Industries (BOLI) to prepare a manual of uniform standards and procedures and provide corresponding mandatory training to the executive department with regard to whistleblower rights and protections. Training modules may be in electronic form, and the manual must be publicly available online. BOLI and identified agencies are also directed to collect and compile specified data for a written report to the Governor and the legislature by January 1st of each odd-numbered year. Finally, the measure requires the Oregon Health Authority and the Departments of Transportation, Human Services, and Environmental Quality to pilot a process that allows anonymous reporting until January 2, 2021.