

Hello. My name is Paul Philpott and I am a political representative for the NW Carpenters Union. I reside in Rainier Oregon. Thank you Chair Taylor and members of the committee for allowing me to testify today on the effects of Covid-19 on our members.

Covid-19 has affected our members all across Oregon to varying degrees. Some of our members have missed a few days of work and others have been unemployed for several months. We have seen job sites shut down for a few days because of potential exposure and we have seen entire industries shut down completely. Some of our members have stayed home because of loved ones with compromised immune systems and others have had to bravely continue to work because they could not afford to stay home. In my testimony today I hope to highlight the things our industry got right and challenges that have arisen because of the pandemic.

Our industry came together, union and non union, contractor associations and government agencies to

address how to do our work safely. With the leadership of Robert Camarillo from the Building Trades a task force was formed. The Building Trades, OSHA, AGC, Home Builders, Carpenters and contractors came together to identify best practices for jobsite safety. We walked job sites all over Oregon and gleaned the best ideas and practices from these sites and shared them with our industry partners. We addressed issues from workers and contractors to make our job sites safer. We had to create our own workplace guidance because there wasn't a consistent set of rules and while we're appreciative of the engagement from our employer counterparts and Oregon OSHA. We would all benefit from strong workplace protections that are created by the agency and echo the Oregon AFL-CIO comments about the need for them to cover all employers and be strengthened.

The first challenge that arose was our outdated unemployment system. Our members are very familiar with Oregon's unemployment process because of the nature of our industry. That said,

many struggled to navigate the system once the pandemic hit because of computer system problems, jammed phone lines, and no clear path to benefits. Many members went months on end with no benefits or communication from the Employment Department. Frustration built as time went on and bills piled up. I fear many of our members will be facing evictions once the moratorium is lifted because of how far behind they fell.

The next challenge was the sick time law. Union construction workers were carved out of the law and do not receive the same benefits as their non union counterparts. Many of our members could have used their sick time bank to supplement the lack of income when ordered to stay home by their employers. Some members lost income through no fault of their own when a coworker fell ill and they were exposed or possibly exposed. Entire crews were sent home so that job sites could be sanitized. Working mothers have to make tough choices when members of their families are ill. I recently spoke to a sister carpenter Laura Tocki-Toggenberger. This

was her response when asked about sick time. “If my child has a doctors appointment or falls ill I risk losing a days wages. I know women right now who are taking unpaid time off to care for their families. The cost of child care and the lack of paid sick time for union construction workers makes it difficult for working mothers to make ends meet. If we truly want to encourage women to join the trades we need to fix the sick time law”

As I stated in my opening Covid has impacted our members in many ways but with the support of this important committee and worker friendly policies we can improve our industry and be better prepared if we find ourselves facing a pandemic in the future.

Chair Taylor and all committee members I thank you for your time.

Paul Philpott
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