

Testimony Regarding LC 21  
December 19, 2021

Chair Kotek, Chair Courtney members of the committee for the record my name is Felisa Hagins I am the Political Director of SEIU Local 49. I am testifying on behalf of SEIU 49 & SEIU 503 an 85,000 member union in Oregon and SW Washington who represents over 8,000 hospital workers and clinic workers, and 30,000 health care and care providers in long term care. Workers at every level have been under a tremendous amount of stress to provide the best patient care possible during the COVID 19 pandemic.

Hospital workers at every level in facilities and our health care system more broadly including nursing homes and in home care have been pushed to near breaking points due to the pandemic. Modern health care this year recently named The Front-Line Worker Most Influential Person in HealthCare in 2020. “ From doctors and nurses to respiratory therapists and anesthesiologists to environmental service workers and administrators, healthcare workers have, as so many across the nation proclaimed, been the true heroes of this pandemic... To protect themselves and those they care for, they have collectively used their voices to demand better protections, better staffing ratios and hazard pay, changes they hope will outlast the pandemic.”<sup>i</sup> The pandemic has been a strain on our entire health care system and over 1,425 US health care workers have died from COVID 19 as reported by Kaiser Health News over a month ago<sup>ii</sup>. The majority of those workers being nurses, certified nursing assistants, janitors and disproportionately black and brown people.

My understanding from the proponents of this measure is that by giving doctors and now expanded to nurses protections from liability it will provide some piece of mind for them in the coming days regarding the difficult and challenging decisions they will have to make about patient care. Having recently spent hours with front line hospital workers. I don't believe any piece of legislation will give a health care provider at any level the peace of mind they deserve for the difficult decisions or times they have already faced and are about to face. And we do not believe that liability caps or indemnification will provide that either.

However, if the committee moves forward with LC 21 an amendment or separate legislation on medical liability. SEIU would strongly encourage two critical amendments first would be the inclusion of nurses and other classes of health care workers who operate as primary care providers. The second we would encourage the committee to expand the whistle blower protections to other health care workers in facilities who have and will continue to have a direct impact on patient care.

As pointed out earlier in my testimony Modern Health care didn't limit the list to doctors and nurses because at every level of a facility hospital workers are responsible for implementing, enforcing and practicing, safe operating procedures to protect patients from the exposure and increased consequences of the COVID 19 pandemic. Environmental service workers are critical to stopping the spread, Certified Nursing assistants spend equitable amounts of time and attention to COVID patients as nurses to provide the best care possible, and respiratory therapists are critical at every juncture in the fight for life and death with COVID patients. Providing quality patient care is a team activity and every member of the team functions at it's peak performance when every members voice is valued. These workers should have the protections needed to speak up when the standard of care is not being met without fear of retaliation or job loss. I am asking for your support on the upcoming amendment. Thank you.

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<sup>i</sup> <https://www.modernhealthcare.com/awards/100-most-influential-people-healthcare-2020>

<sup>ii</sup> [Lost on the Frontline | Kaiser Health News \(khn.org\)](#)



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