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Employment Law

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Via Hand Delivery

Senate Committee on Workforce

Re: Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 479
On behalf of the Oregon Trial Lawyers Association

Chair Taylor and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of SB 479, a bill to provide access to justice for Oregonians. Oregon Trial Lawyers Association members fight for both public and private sector workers who face on-the-job harassment and discrimination for reasons such as their gender, race, or disability.

OTLA strongly supports the effort to provide information to state workers about their rights to be free of harassment and information on how to vindicate their rights, should they experience unlawful harassment. OTLA members are hopeful that the changes contemplated by the introduced bill will enhance the ability of state workers to work in a harassment-free environment.

OTLA members particularly support the provision requiring a process that enables the public employer to truly ensure a workplace free of harassment, through consistently seeking information about the work environment from those who have reported the existence of a hostile environment.

We commend committee members for all your efforts to improve the quality of life for workers and to provide them on-the-job protections. In order to ensure that the protections passed by the committee are effective, they must be enforceable. By providing employees an enforcement mechanism through ORS 659A.885(3), the committee will be able to ensure workers have access to the essential rights that are supported by this bill.

OTLA supports the effort to give workers more information about their rights and urges a yes vote on SB 479, with amendments providing a private right of action.

Sincerely,
Christina Stephenson