

To Whom It May Concern:

Right before Christmas I was contacted and given details by my school district business manager regarding SB 1067. I was beyond shocked that this bill was passed by Oregon lawmakers. My family will be adversely affected by this bill and now we find ourselves having to figure out how we're going to deal with the consequences from SB 1067.

We live in Lakeview. My husband is the only ODOT field mechanic for Region 4/District 11 Lakeview/Adel/Alkali Lake section and I am the 7-12 English/Social Studies teacher for the Paisley school district. I commute to Paisley and drive 100 miles round trip a day. This is a very rural and isolated section of our state. We've lived here for over six years, moving from the Portland Metro region. We've grown to love this area and try to serve our community with integrity. As public employees we knew that we wouldn't be earning as much income as we would in the private sector but felt that it was the right thing to do anyway. The tradeoffs for being a public employee are the fringe benefits such as good health insurance that covers our family.

We have four children so double coverage insurance is very important. We have had double coverage (through public and private sector) for our family throughout our entire marriage. We both paid for college ourselves and are still paying off student loans as our children head off to college. We are a healthy family and take care of ourselves. Last year, my husband and one of our sons were diagnosed with extreme and surprising health issues. During an eye exam it was discovered that my husband has a rare eye disease that can lead to blindness. It's not genetic and has no known cause. It simply appears. He must have monthly shots in his eye to keep him from going blind as well as laser eye surgery to try to stop the effects of the disease. We have to travel to Medford to see the eye specialist which is over three hours from our home. Between our two insurances, our copay is manageable but without being double covered, we will have an exorbitant monthly expense and I don't know how we will cover it. Then our third child, who is a senior in high school, was diagnosed last year with an auto-immune disease. He spent most of his junior year in and out of Doernbecher's Children's Hospital which is a seven hour drive from our home. This was a huge travel expense for our family on top of the medical bills that weren't covered by our insurance. I have remarked several times how grateful I am that we are double covered or else we would go bankrupt. Both of these health issues are ongoing for my son and husband and so are the expenses. We can manage the symptoms but they will never be cured.

My husband and I are productive members of society. We aren't looking for a handout. We've been to college, tried to live within our means, and make responsible choices for our family which includes our career paths. Now, with the passage of SB 1067 we are losing our double coverage for our family even though we are both doing the exact same jobs without receiving further compensation for losing coverage. We've been weighing our options of how to deal with this detrimental situation and we've concluded that one of us needs to leave the public sector and find work in the private sector in order to have double coverage insurance once again. This will mean that our family must move from the area to find new employment. It's unfortunate that the Oregon legislature feels they must penalize the hardworking families of Oregon.

I'm certain that we're not the only family facing this situation. We hope that you will consider overturning this bill and support Oregon families.

Thank you-

Courtney and John Wertz