

To: Committee

From: Patti Jo Powell

RE: HB 3075

Dear Members of the Committee:

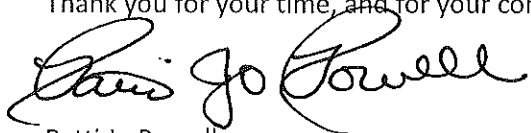
For the record my name is Patti Jo Powell, and I am an SEIU 503 member. I am a Procurement and Contract Assistant in John Day with the John Day Fish Screening & Passage Program of the Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife. My spouse is a Fish & Wildlife Technician also with the John Day Fish Screening & Passage Program of the Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife in John Day, where he has been employed for over 27 years. I love my job and have been an employee of the State of Oregon for almost 12 years because of my love for the outdoors and all of its natural resources. I finally felt like I was able to make a difference and help, at least in some small way, protect those natural resources for the future generations to enjoy.

I am writing to you to ask you to restore coordinated spousal coverage for public service workers like me, by supporting House Bill 3075. The decision to take this benefit away only from workers whose spouses also work in public service is fundamentally unfair, and will have serious consequences for my family.

We live in a small rural community where we already have limited options for insurance coverage. We don't have the availability to pick between 4 or 5 plans to save premium dollars, but work diligently to pick to the most cost effective plan we can to provide quality care for our family. Also, we also incur additional costs to travel approximately 2-3 hours in any direction to see a specialist of any kind. Our hospital attempts to bring specialists to our area but the availability of appointments is so hard to get that you can be months out trying to see someone. If you need any kind of specialized care, you will have to pay additional out of pocket costs for fuel, wear & tear on vehicles, food, and possibly motel stays, sometimes for multiple nights. We tighten our belts and pinch pennies as much as we can but now that we are facing the possibility of losing our double coverage, I don't know how we are going to continue to make up that additional cost. As married state employees, faced with losing our double coverage insurance, we will now have to seriously consider whether we can afford to keep our jobs or whether it is time for one of us to look to the private sector where we won't face this kind of discrimination for double coverage insurance. And that is what this is, plain and simple, discrimination for being married and both working for the State of Oregon.

The work that my colleagues and I do is important, and we don't do it for the money. However, when you take away benefits from only workers who are committed to public services, but not others, you are creating an inequity in our workplaces and making public service less and less attractive. I am asking you to restore our ability to make our own decisions about how our family is insured.

Thank you for your time, and for your commitment to this issue.



Patti Jo Powell

Procurement & Contract Assistant/SEIU Member

John Day

