

To: Committee,
From: Russ Marcus Powell
RE: HB3075

Dear Members of the committee,

For the record my name is Russ Marcus Powell, and I am an SEIU 503 member. I am a Fish Habitat Biologist in John Day /Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife. My spouse is a Senior Technician in John Day/Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife. I love my job, and I have done this work for 28 years because of my love for the outdoors and being an integral part of doing my job to restore fish habitat along the majestic streambanks of our great state of Oregon. My work is to enhance and restore the vital fish species of Oregon and improve their habitat. We also work with the landowners to assure passage and develop off-site water and include pasture rotation for livestock on their property. Our program has helped to not only restore streambanks but also help landowner operations. The John Day Fish habitat enhancement program has been in existence since 1984. We currently maintain 280 miles of riparian fence on 70 different private landowner's properties.

I am writing you all today to ask you to restore coordinated spousal coverage for public service workers like me, by supporting House Bill HB3075. 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.

Our household would be affected greatly by removing one of our insurance coverages. I have worked hard my whole life as has my spouse. We have a combined 49 years of service working for the state of Oregon. Now we are being threatened/penalized by removing coverage and this would impact our way of life by the rising costs of medical care. It is unfair to penalize us as we are both working for the State of Oregon. Other people working have double coverage and are not affected. To be fair, either reinstate our double coverage or make it a law that no one can be double covered no matter where they work across the board. This will no doubt have a huge impact on the state of Oregon people. From where I stand I feel as though this is discrimination by all definition.

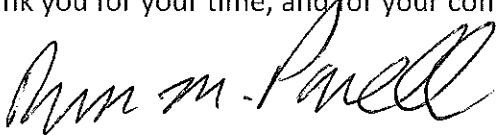
We are employed, we pay into insurance individually but because we both have coverage and are married should not be up to law makers to decide how this is allocated. We did not become state workers to rely upon insurance being paid. We became State employees because of the great work that is being done to our environment to enhance not only fish but wildlife as well, and in doing so have been successful in building relationships with landowners and enjoying the

benefits for future generations, this includes everyone in our state. Maybe by some of the work we have done you all can hunt, fish, bird/wildlife/aquatic view and any number of things you enjoy in the outdoors. We should not have to be penalized by this bill or have to be subject to this monetary burden. It is unfair.

We are at the age in our lives we make regular visits for medical and vision care. This would definitely make working for the state of Oregon less attractive for myself and my spouse. In July I was in a serious accident and broke my back and needed extensive medical care and was very grateful for our insurance that we paid into and worked for. My husband had a total knee replacement in December and we also were grateful for our insurance that it was not a financial burden on us. Because we both have insurance we both have state jobs this should be a non-issue.

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 workers where both spouses who are committed to public services, but not others, you are creating an inequity in our workplaces and making public service 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.



Russ M. Powell
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