



April 2, 2019

HB3262 – Oregon Taxpayer Reimbursement Act

Chair Salinas and Members of the Committee:

Please accept this written testimony on behalf of United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 555 for the Oregon Taxpayer Reimbursement Act. UFCW Local 555 represents over 25,000 workers in Oregon and Southwest Washington in many industries, including retail, meatpacking, healthcare, and more. UFCW workers are a diverse group that have grown into the largest private sector labor union in Oregon. We are proud to be a strong collective voice for working people.

UFCW Local 555's members are pleased to provide support for HB3262. For far too long we have supported an infrastructure that provides a business incentive for employers who offer poor working conditions and unfair treatment of their employees, paying workers so little that thousands of working Oregonians are forced to rely on public assistance programs including SNAP and the Oregon Health Plan. Programs funded by Oregon taxpayers.

This impacts workers such as Mary Lazard, who was in the audience here last Thursday. Despite working and wanting to support herself, Mary has had no choice but to apply for and receive SNAP benefits. Over the past few years she has also had to intermittently use the Oregon Health Plan and is in the process of applying again. Mary's story is not uncommon – thousands of workers are affected by this. These employees are not asking for a hand out – they want to be self sufficient. They need stable, scheduled hours in order to support their families. HB3262 is focused on larger companies, with over 100 employees, within specific industries where we have seen the practice of shifting healthcare costs to public benefits most commonly used.

Some estimates show that each worker on the just Oregon Health Plan costs taxpayers \$600 a month. We feel the Oregon Health Plan is a good quality plan. If in fact it is the best plan employers can make available to their employees we support this – but they must start paying the cost. We can no longer afford this form of corporate welfare.

Thank you for your attention to this issue.

Sincerely,

Beth Cooke
On behalf of UFCW Local 555