

1 March 2021

Statement of Aaron Arntson

Chair Dexter and distinguished members of the Legislature,

My name is Aaron Arntson. I am a member and Chief Steward of SEIU. I currently work at the DMV office in Bend. Hundreds of my co-workers and I have been customer-facing, showing up every day to help the citizens of Oregon get their business done. We see nearly 300 each day at my office as well as do dozens of drive tests each week. Imagine getting in a car with a stranger and taking a 20-30 minute drive right now? We do this every day because we want to help our fellow citizens and know this work is important for state revenue as well.

Now I am only a month away from contracting Covid while at work and just like many of my fellow DMV'ers I was very sick. I lived in much fear that the person I share the house with would get sick too. He luckily did not but he had to stay home from work for 10 days. Thankfully I am getting better each day but this is not the case for every worker who gets sick.

My office has had multiple cases and when you see hundreds of customers, drive in their vehicles and handle their documents the chances of getting sick are not inconsequential. We have tolerated minimal PPE at the beginning of this pandemic and now have somewhat better standards but still, we get sick because we can't sterilize the thousands of documents and currency we handle each week at just my office alone. Hand sanitizer is good but this is a huge volume of paper that comes into the office not to mention having to deal with folks who are angry, frustrated, and still think wearing a mask is some kind of infringement on their freedoms. These have been difficult times for all of us and the DMV front-line workers have taken wave after wave of verbal abuse and frustrated, angry, and at times belligerent customers all during this pandemic who want and need services. And yet we show up every day to get the job done but we need your help.

We have been repeatedly deemed Essential, show up every day, and yet continue to wait for our chance to get vaccinated. Now we are told our day is coming in another two months. Really?! We have come to work worried, anxious, and concerned for our families and loved ones as well as our co-workers. But still, we are asked again to increase our appointments and drive test numbers ever higher, and still, we have to wait...I'm asking for your help to put us first and demonstrate we are truly essential by getting us access right now. Not in two months, we need this now.

I conclude with my sincere appreciation for your time and implore you to help us. We can't wait any longer, we are getting sick and we want to do our important work for our fellow citizens. Good afternoon and thanks again for hearing my words.

Respectfully,

Aaron Arntson

Bend