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# A STRONG VOICE FOR OREGON'S WORKERS

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TO: Chair Holvey  
Vice-Chair Bonham & Grayber  
Members of the House Committee On Business and Labor

FR: Jacob Finkelman, OR AFL-CIO

RE: HB 3029 Support

March 2, 2021

The Oregon AFL-CIO represents 300,000 workers across Oregon and is a voice for all workers in the legislative process. The COVID-19 pandemic has created added challenges for workers who want to come together to form a union. One of these barriers is the requirement of physical card signing to join a union. Currently, workers must put themselves and their communities at risk of contracting COVID-19 in order to sign their union cards.

Under the Public Employee Collective Bargaining Act (PECBA) you must turn in a physical card with a signature in order for workers to petition to form a public sector labor union. Under the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) you can use electronic signatures on authorization cards to form a private sector labor union. We believe that the rules should be the same and allow electronic signatures for union authorization cards to organize public sector labor unions.

As of now, public sector employees need to take vacation time to travel to have their cards signed, endangering themselves and the others. All workers deserve union protection, but it is fundamentally unsafe to have to meet with people face-to-face to simply sign a union card.

Staying safe during the pandemic has created significant challenges to forming a union. Those who work in the public sector -- including firefighters, nurses, and employees who continue to make sure our governments run -- have been some of the most affected workers. When you need to get a physical card that means you have to come into contact with workers, which even in the best circumstances is less safe. It is also very difficult to talk to workers in person because of remote working and limited access to the work sites for health and safety reasons. These unforeseen barriers to organizing have no basis on the workers desire to organize. They are all logistics-based and not based on merit.

Electronic signatures are regularly -- and increasingly -- used in most workplaces and is already the law at the federal level for private sector unions. Moving all possible work and communication to electronic means is a critical part of the larger strategy to staying homes and saving lives during COVID-19 and future emergencies. Please support House Bill 2039 and electronic signatures for union authorization for public sector workers.

