

Chair Riley, Vice Chair Hansell, and members of the Committee,

My name is Kristina Jones, and I am an Apprentice Inside Wireman with the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, Local Union 48, out of Portland. I am writing in support of Senate Bill 588.

Oregon's new paid sick leave law went into effect on January 1st of 2016. On that same day, there were many people who were not afforded the same rights and protections under this law. I write to you as a member of a group of those excluded Oregonians - the union construction workers.

We are the hard working people who are trained to build some of the most important buildings in Oregon, such as the recently completed Multnomah County Central Courthouse. My union sisters and brothers used their craftsmanship, innovation, hard work and determination to build this impressive 17-story tower. Many different trades and thousands of workers came together and built a safe, efficient and sturdy building that will stand the test of time. We did this without paid time off to care for our own health conditions and that of our family members.

By passing Senate Bill 588, you have an opportunity to show there is broad value for working Oregonians who build and maintain the buildings our society requires to do its business. In addition, there stands to be a positive impact with benefits for our workers and the public at large.

The challenges of 2020 surrounding COVID-19 shook every industry and household in an unprecedented way. Some of those hit the hardest have been working mothers who often work a "double shift" - a full day of work, followed by hours spent caring for children and doing household labor. Take away the support of school and childcare, and we see the pressure working mothers are under, especially those without paid sick leave.

The US Bureau of Labor and Statistics reports that in 2020 women made up 9.1% of all construction workers. Women are a vital part of a diverse and integrated workforce. We should do everything possible during this crisis to ensure these talented working mothers can stay in the workplace – and not feel forced out due to lack of adequate leave and support. In addition to women's issues, COVID-19 has also highlighted the importance of personal and public health.

This has been a very difficult time for essential employees – like construction workers – without paid sick leave because, for them, staying home can mean not collecting a paycheck, and it is not uncommon for people to return to work while sick. Besides the obvious concerns of someone passing their illness to other coworkers, most construction occurs in public places and can put the public at a higher risk as well.

Another aspect to consider is being sick can mean minds are clouded and distracted which is especially bad in an industry like construction that is inherently very dangerous. A misjudgment could turn into a critical error and safety incident, which could result in injury or loss of life. Every measure needs to be taken to ensure construction workers and the public are as safe as possible.

Please support me and thousands of other union construction workers by supporting SB 588, which extends paid sick leave benefits to more Oregonians.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Kristina Jones, IBEW LU 48