

Testimony on in Support of SB 588
Kathryn Mura
May 10, 2021

Chair Holvey and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of Senate Bill 588. My name is Kate Mura and I am submitting this testimony as a member of IATSE Local 28.

I am writing to offer support for SB 588 because it represents a common-sense solution for helping to ensure that workers are no longer excluded from being able to access to basic earned sick leave standards and employment protections that currently apply to most all sectors today. We know that when workers do not have paid time off, they are 1.5 times more likely to go to work even when they have a contagious illness. That is why we cannot wait any longer to close the loophole in the current Paid Sick Leave law to ensure that union members hired through hiring halls are able to stay home when they are sick or care for their loved ones when needed.

- Access to basic earned sick leave has been shown to reduce employee turnover and related hiring/recruitment costs for employers.
- Lowers health care costs, as workers without paid sick leave are three times more likely to defer medical care for themselves and two times more likely to forego care for their families.
- Reduces preventable and costly Emergency Room visits.
- Aligns a consistent standard for all employers to follow, leveling the playing field for employers who currently have similar policies in place or that currently meet minimum standards under the law.
- Helps better ensure that more workers do not have to face impossible choices between going to work sick or risking infection or foregoing their income to stay home when needed. This point is particularly important for my industry. Because our work- even before the pandemic- was sporadic, stagehands are very likely to work sick. In part it is because "the show must go on" and in part because it might be our only work for a while.
- Access to earned sick leave has correlated to reduced spread of COVID-19 and helping to flatten the curve.
- Thirteen states and Washington D.C. have now enacted laws requiring paid sick leave, yet Oregon is the only one with an explicit blanket carve out specified in these terms.
- Everyone gets sick, regardless of sector.
- SB 588 does not create a wholly new program or system. It extends the same minimum protections and ability to accrue earned sick leave to workers currently excluded from coverage.
- In 2019, women made up nearly half the U.S. total workforce and an increasing share of our construction sector, while still often taking on a disproportionate share of family caregiving responsibilities. This lack of a basic sick leave standard can lead to false choices for workers who also care for their families.
- Oregon's sick leave law has been in effect since 2016 and has not been shown to have had an adverse effect on employment or economic activity. Other areas that enacted earned sick leave laws prior to our state have reported negligible/minimal effect on overall business costs.

I cannot count the amount of times I and my coworkers have gone to work sick. I have also started a show healthy, only to catch a cold from someone else who came to work sick. Show runs are short 1-7 days frequently, 14 – 21 for a long run, over 21 days are The Nutcracker & Lion King. I am in close confines with other stage hands and actors as a dresser, putting on and off costumes, wigs, and make-up. Having this loophole closed will make me be financially able to call in sick, for the health of all involved.

The recovery plan must center the safety of working families and the communities they serve and live in and removing this unsafe carve out is one such critical step towards advancing that vital goal, so that workers are not left further behind in any areas of our economy.

I urge your support for SB 588.

Sincerely,

Kathryn Mura
IATSE Local 28 members