



**Service Employees International Union – Oregon State Council**  
6401 SE Foster ▪ Portland, OR 97206

February 24, 2021,

Chair Power and Members of the Subcommittee,

For the record my name is Katie Shriver and I represent SEIU Oregon. SEIU is a very diverse union representing health care workers, property services workers, homecare and personal support workers, nursing home and nonprofit workers, janitors, public workers, and many others. We are an 85,000 member union in Oregon and SW Washington. SEIU opposes HB 2638.

Many SEIU members are among the frontline workers who have put their lives at risk every day during the COVID-19 pandemic to provide services to communities and to provide for their families. SEIU members who work at the airport, at hospitals, at nursing homes, in childcare, in home care, providing essential state services, and in many other jobs have all continued to work and have borne considerable risk doing so.

Our current system allows employers to be held liable in order to prevent them from exposing their staff to undue risk. HB 2638 would take all legal remedy away from workers. This would be akin to giving businesses and other employers carte blanche authority to skip COVID-safe protocols with no possibility of consequences.

Some examples of workers who have continued to work through the pandemic and who should be able to feel safe reporting violations if their employer does not take proper COVID precautions include:

- A nursing home employee who sees their employer fail to staff adequately to accomplish core disinfection tasks.
- A housekeeper who notices the hospital they work for not follow proper COVID protocols.
- An employee at the airport whose employer does not provide appropriate protective equipment.
- A security officer who knows that their employer is not enforcing the federal and state mask mandates or occupancy requirements.

Many Oregon employers are doing the right things: making sure workers can work from home when possible, providing paid time off, paying fair wages, and providing good health benefits. And in most instances workers only look to a lawsuit when they have no other choice. However, for many workers, especially low wage workers and workers of color, they must continue to show up for work and fear retaliation for reporting any unsafe conditions.

Please vote no on HB 2638.