



A STRONG VOICE FOR OREGON'S WORKERS

TO: Chair Riley
Vice-Chair Hansell
Members of the Senate Business and Labor Committee

FR: Catie Theisen, OR AFL-CIO

RE: Opposition to SB 17 Weakening licensing standards

February 25 , 2021

The Oregon AFL-CIO represents 300,000 workers across Oregon and is a voice for all workers in the legislative process. As such, we represent thousands of licensed workers who go through significant training and requirements to earn their Oregon license and work in our state.

Simply, those license requirements are in place for a reason -- in many instances, Oregon has some of the best standards in the nation, meaning that nurses provide the highest quality of care to patients, trades craftspeople are at the top of their industry in building projects, and childcare workers and teachers are providing top-notch and tailored education to children. Oregon building codes, laws, curriculum and quality of care are different and higher than in neighboring states and deserve tailored and specific education and licensing for workers. Removing these requirements, even temporarily, will undoubtedly weaken the quality of work -- and the quality of life for workers and our communities.

A blanket "provisional license" standard, as would be created in Senate Bill 17, circumvents existing licensing requirements and undercuts many of the reciprocity agreements some industries have already negotiated for out-of-state licenses to practice in Oregon.

Although we appreciate the need for highly qualified workers in rural areas, in many instances this is subverting the local workforce development programs already in place, and exacerbating the much larger problem of recruiting and retaining *Oregonians* to fill these critical jobs. We also fully understand the critical need to diversify our workforce in Oregon and would welcome a collaborative conversation to make sure that currently and historically marginalized groups can enter these fields. However, a blanket provisional licensure program simply goes too far, and will likely work against developing a comprehensive pipeline of local workers for these positions in Oregon.

On quality of life, we know that labor standards and worker protections are more robust in Oregon than in many other states. And when labor standards are weakened, we've seen time after time that it is the most currently and historically marginalized workers who are most adversely impacted. SB 17 fundamentally weakens our high labor standards by enabling out-of-state, unlicensed workers to step in.

Ultimately, this bill will allow for workers who have not achieved all of the Oregon licensing requirements to enter some of the jobs that are most impactful to Oregon's communities: public safety, public health, and caring for and educating our children. That is not a risk we should be taking now or as the health and economy of our state rebounds from a global pandemic. We urge your No vote on SB 17.