



A STRONG VOICE FOR OREGON'S WORKERS

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

FR: Catie Theisen, Oregon AFL-CIO

RE: HB 4113 Support, Firefighter Workers Compensation Equity

February 3, 2022

The Oregon AFL-CIO represents 300,000 workers across the state and is proud to be a voice for all workers in the legislative process. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 4113 to cover with a rebuttable presumption the full range of reproductive system cancers and to cover bladder cancer for firefighters.

Oregon's Workers' Compensation system is meant to provide wage replacement and medical coverage for workers who are injured on the job. Current statute has a number of rebuttable presumptions for firefighters since firefighting is one of the very few jobs where workers don't have a choice on whether or not workers are exposed to dangerous carcinogens. According to the CDC, cancer is the number one killer of firefighters.

The bill first creates equity by adding gynecological reproductive cancers to the list of rebuttable presumptions for firefighters. Currently, prostate and testicular cancers are already covered under workers' compensation presumption. This bill simply creates parity across all firefighters, regardless of what reproductive organs a person has. There are 276 career female firefighters. The addition of these cancers is a moral imperative that will have a miniscule impact on the Workers Compensation system in claims and costs.

Finally, the bill adds bladder cancer to the list of presumptive coverage. In addition to prostate and testicular cancers, colon, stomach and rectal cancers are all already covered for firefighters. Bladder cancer is occurring with increasing frequency and in younger firefighters across the nation. 42 states in this nation recognize bladder cancer as a threat to their firefighters and address presumptive bladder coverage. Oregon is one of only 8 that do not.

HB 4113 will ensure that all firefighters will get equal protections if they receive a reproductive cancer diagnosis or a bladder cancer diagnosis. Ultimately, this is a workforce issue. Oregon is struggling to hire and retain firefighters, especially in contrast to neighboring states. It's also one of fairness and equity that should not be ignored or put off any longer. We encourage your Yes vote on HB 4113.