



International Association of Sheet Metal, Air, Rail, Transportation Workers

LOCAL UNION NO. 16

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Chair Taylor, Vice Chair Bonham and members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit my testimony today. My name is Scott Strickland, Special Projects Counsel for SMART Local 16, representing over 2,000 skilled sheet metal workers across 32 counties in Oregon and Southwest Washington. We strongly encourage your support of SB 592 to improve workplace safety and health in Oregon. As a worker who was exposed to asbestos on the job, I can personally attest to the importance of effective enforcement of workplace safety and health laws.

SB 592 improves current safety and health practices with the goal of making all workplaces in Oregon safer. Currently, Oregon OSHA can assess a penalty when an injury or death occurs as a result of a serious safety and health violation like a lack of training, equipment maintenance or supervision, preventable exposure to toxins, or even lack of safety gear like harnesses or hard hats.

However, Oregon OSHA penalties for these serious violations continue to be the lowest in the nation. In 2021 the average Oregon penalty for an injury that resulted from a serious violation was just over \$600 – 5 times less than the national average. And from an inspection due to a workplace death, Oregon’s average penalty was just over \$1,000 – over 10 times less than the national OSHA penalty average. These low penalties mean that the worst actors can commit multiple safety and health violations before the fine is significant enough to incentivize a change in behavior.

SB 592 also strengthens inspections – which we know are also an imperative component in making workplaces safer. SB 592 would trigger a comprehensive whole-workplace inspection if 3 or more violations occur within a year or an occupational death occurs. Currently, estimations suggest that it would take Oregon OSHA 112 years to inspect every workplace in Oregon. SB 592 ensures that when a death has occurred, a full inspection is done, checking that here are not related or wholly separate safety and health issues that could lead to another injury or death at the same workplace.

Unfortunately, we know that injuries and deaths take place across every industry in Oregon, especially in construction. It’s OSHA’s charge to protect workers by providing resources to employers and workers, inspecting workplaces, and rectifying employer mistakes or negligence. SB 592 improves reporting, strengthens penalties, and helps make sure that more workplaces are safe before another injury or death occurs.

Even one worker death or injury from a preventable workplace hazard is too many and ultimately hurts the economy and our communities at large. Failure to provide a safe workplace should never make financial sense for a business owner. Please do everything you can to make workplaces as safe as possible in Oregon. We encourage your support of SB 592.

Respectfully,

Scott Strickland
Special Projects Counsel
SMART Local 16

“The Most Productive Workforce in the Industry”