

Submitter: Angelica Ortiz
On Behalf Of: Tillamook Bay Community College
Committee: Senate Committee On Labor and Business
Measure: SB907

Members of the Committee, for the record, my name is Angelica Ortiz. I'm the resource navigator at Tillamook Bay Community College and I live in Tillamook, Oregon.

I support SB 907 because I have worked with Oregonians who have suffered serious, life-altering injuries on the job in working conditions that never should have been allowed to occur. Several of my students are struggling with trauma, fear and uncertainty due to the dangerous that they face every day in their workplace. They could quit their jobs or refuse to work under those conditions, but the reality is that they need to have a job and they are afraid to say something that may lead to lose their jobs. Just in the year 2022, I have five students that got injured in the workplace and only one of them receive a work compensation, the other four were so afraid to said something and they are suffering in silence and not able to work as they used to.

While state rules allow workers to refuse unsafe work in theory, right now it is very difficult to exercise this right, and doing so often results in retaliation.

This is no theoretical problem. Data shows that workplace hazards kill approximately 125,000 workers each year in the U.S.—4,764 from traumatic injuries and another 120,000 from occupational diseases. This averages out to 340 workers deaths each day from hazardous working conditions. Increasing extreme weather events are only exacerbating these problems for many workers.

Outdoor workers, for example, account for 20% of heat-related deaths. Here in Oregon, people working on the frontlines--including in smoke and extreme heat--are at a high risk of illness and death. For example, there were at least 254 complaints submitted to OSHA during the Summer heat waves in 2020 and at least 3 deaths during the 3 day period of the heat-dome.

SB 907 would allow workers to reasonably refuse to do work that can cause them death, serious impairment, or serious injury— such as extreme heat or unsafe equipment. In response, an employer can either fix the dangerous condition, or move workers to other jobs that are not hazardous. Additionally, it would give workers the right to use PTO time to leave or refuse to report to a worksite due to extreme natural disasters, active evacuations, and acts of criminal violence such as mass shootings.

SB 907 does not create a new right— nor does it give an unfettered right for workers to refuse to work. It takes an existing right that is hidden in an administrative rule,

and clarifies it in statute. It would use Oregon's already-established rebuttable presumption to protect workers who exercise this right from retaliation.

Please vote 'Yes' on SB 907. Workers are being killed in Oregon at higher rates than neighboring states. We need to give workers the option to protect themselves in dangerous workplace situations. Thank you for your time.

Angelica Ortiz
Resource Navigator at Tillamook Bay Community College.