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SB 907

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

I am a Naturopathic Doctor who has served the undocumented, low income and underserved communities in the Salem/Woodburn area.

I am writing to express strong support for the passage of SB 907.

As a doctor serving undocumented workers, I have heard many stories of completely unreasonable and unsanitary conditions, that also put public health at risk. This is especially important in a state with a large agricultural economy.

It is telling that most of the opposition comes from agricultural industries, manufacturing and the association for assisted living/nursing facilities. These industries are well-known for their difficult work conditions and unreasonable expectations from workers.

This important bill does not create a new right– nor does it give an unlimited right for workers to refuse to work. It takes an existing right that is hidden in an administrative rule, and clarifies it in statute. The administrative rule is very difficult to read and understand even by experienced attorneys. The bill clarifies the language itself and its application. SB 907 would also use Oregon’s already-established rebuttable presumption to protect workers who exercise this right from retaliation.

Dangerous conditions are only increasing due to climate change, for example in instances of extreme heat, smoke from fires, etc. Outdoor workers, for example, account for 20% of heat-related deaths. A study conducted in 2022 in Merced County with 1200 farmworkers, showed that 13% had to keep working when smoke made it difficult to breathe, with one-third reporting no access to respirators.

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. An employer can either fix the dangerous condition, or move workers to other jobs that are not hazardous.

Additionally, SB 907 would give workers the right to use existing PTO time as per their contracts, to leave or refuse to report to a dangerous worksite

Low income and undocumented workers, which are over represented in the industries opposing this legislation, are often afraid of exercising their basic rights. Living at poverty level or below,

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such decisions mean the workers and their families could fall back on rent, healthcare bills or be unable to feed the family. The Merced County study finds that over a third of agricultural workers were unwilling to file a complaint if employers were out of compliance with labor laws because of fear of retaliation.

SB 907 is mostly a clarifying bill that established clear guidelines and protects some of our most vulnerable essential workers. It makes the language less obfuscating, while also asserting the existing rights of some of our most exploited and vulnerable workers, whom we have depended on during the COVID pandemic.

Therefore, I strongly urge you to vote in support of SB 907.

Sincerely,



Nathalie Paravicini, ND