



Senate Committee on Labor and Business

March 16, 2023

Testimony in Support of SB 907

Chair Taylor, Vice-Chair Bonham, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Janet Bauer, Director of Policy Research at the Oregon Center for Public Policy. I respectfully submit this testimony in support of SB 907 on behalf of the Center.

The Oregon Center for Public Policy is a nonpartisan think tank dedicated to improving the economic outcomes for all Oregonians, particularly low-income families and Oregonians of color, through research and analysis.

SB 907 would clarify in statute Oregon's existing administrative rules granting the right to refuse dangerous work. Oregon's current rules are difficult for workers to understand and to apply in practice. Lack of clarity leaves workers reticent to refuse to work when they should and vulnerable to injury and death.

Oregon workers tragically and needlessly die on the job each year. According to OHSU, 48 workers died in Oregon 2020 — a rate of about one death every week. The industries where deaths occur are of no surprise: agriculture, transportation, and construction have been among the most dangerous over the past decade.

Workers themselves are important in preventing workplace injury and death, as they are often the most acutely aware of the factors in a particular work situation that pose risks. Yet, workers in Oregon are not encouraged to act based on their reasonable judgment or adequately protected when they do.

To remedy this, Oregon should make explicit in statute that workers have the right to exercise reasonable judgment to protect themselves and their co-workers when faced with situations that threaten their health and safety.

Our mission is to achieve economic justice for all Oregonians through research, analysis, and advocacy.

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Oregon workers have a right to a safe work environment. SB 907 is a reasonable proposal to codify that workers may act without fear of retaliation when they exercise reasonable judgment to stay safe.

We urge you to support SB 907.

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