

Chair Prozanski, Vice Chair Thatcher, Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak on this important issue. I wanted to address this committee today as an Oregon resident and consumer, a special investigator employed with Farmers Insurance, and the wife of a small business owner. I urge you to oppose House Bill 3242 and House Bill 3243. The thing is, we've been here before. I've testified in previous years against similar legislation because these bills won't help the average consumer, only hurt them. First, we should recognize that the current system we have is the reflection of numerous previous legislatures' work to protect consumers. As a result of the work done in prior sessions, if someone feels their claim was handled improperly, they can file a complaint with the Insurance Commissioner's office and request an investigation. The bills discussed today would significantly increase the cost of claims handling in Oregon which would result in even more cost to the consumers. HB 3242 will alter Oregon's proven system of resolving questions about whether claims were handled in bad faith by incentivizing protracted litigation, disrupting my ability to effectively serve clients, and creating a substantial risk of litigation, leaving consumers and insurers both holding the bag for the increased litigation costs. HB 3243 will create dual enforcement, making it harder for us to serve our customers and will only result in driving up compliance costs. It doesn't help consumers to tie one of our hands behind our backs. Both bills will make it harder to resolve claims and, based on the experiences in other states like Washington and Florida, drive up the cost of insurance. The Department of Consumer and Business Services has created a strong insurance market that protects consumers and keeps costs down. We should work to pass laws that help decrease insurance premiums for Oregon residents instead of destabilizing our insurance market and lining the pockets of attorneys. Personally, and I assume many of you can relate to this, my husband and I have policies out on two vehicles (with a teen driver soon), our home in Newberg, an umbrella, and insurance for our small business. With the recent steep inflation, our expenses are already a stressor and we are cutting corners wherever possible at home and within our business. I assume our family is representative of many of your constituents; please think about what corners you're asking people to cut in their budgets if this bill passes as it has the potential to be significant. Please do what is right for the residents of Oregon and oppose these bills. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Melissa Carter

Farmers Insurance Exchange