



# OREGON STATE FIRE FIGHTERS COUNCIL

International Association of Fire Fighters  
AFL-CIO CLC

House Business & Labor Committee

April 18, 2023

Chair Paul Holvey  
Vice Chair Lucetta Elmer  
Vice Chair Nathan Sosa

## **Re: Testimony on SB 592**

Chair Holvey, Vice Chairs Sosa and Elmer, members of the House Business and Labor Committee,

For the record my name is Karl Koenig, President of the Oregon State Fire Fighters Council (OSFFC) a labor organization representing over 3,700 fire fighters, paramedics, wildland, and fire prevention professionals throughout the State of Oregon.

We are in favor of Senate Bill 592, the modernization and overhaul of the Oregon OSHA fine system. This bill updates the current fine system to reflect Federal OSHA penalties and is adjusted annually for inflation.

SB 592 also triggers a comprehensive worksite investigation within a year of a work-related fatality that was caused or contributed to the fatality. In the event of three or more willful violations in a year the same comprehensive investigation shall occur.

Finally, SB 592 requires Oregon OSHA report the number of inspections completed, penalties assessed and appeals at least annually.

As one example of promoting a safety culture the fire service, we worked with and instituted a fire fatality investigation system with the National Institute of Occupational Health and Safety (NIOSH). These reports are investigations that look to improve and recognize, document and create a learning opportunity in the event of a fire ground



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fatality. These reports, while not associated with a fine system or violations, it comes to conclusions and list critical occurrences that lead to fire ground fatalities. We mention this as part of developing a comprehensive system of safety and accountability for the American Fire Service. We have several examples in Oregon that can work if we include all levels of the workplace. Morning Safety Briefings, Workplace Wellness Programs where for every \$1 invested returns \$7 in actual savings. Preventative Screenings, cessation programs, alternate duty programs getting workers back on the job sooner to name just a few. This relationship with NIOSH has improved our relationship with our employers, Or-OSHA and our Worker Compensation carriers through the very accountability and examination a comprehensive investigation brings to our fire agencies throughout Oregon.

This modernization incentive creates a measurable level of accountability that employers understand. It is much easier to start a culture of safety when there is a meaningful fine system that reflects the seriousness of an occupational loss of life.

The Oregon State Fire Fighters Council urges a yes vote on SB 592 in House Business and Labor Committee. With passage overall worker safety, investigatory purpose and appropriate fine structure creating meaningful incentives for employers and employees to thrive in Oregon's work sites and workplaces.

Respectfully,

*Karl Koenig* s/s

Karl Koenig  
President  
Oregon State Fire Fighters Council