



Testimony in Support of SB 1518
Oregon Caregiver Wage Protection Act
Senate Business and Labor Committee
Alice Longley Miller, SEIU Local 503

Chair Taylor, Vice Chair Hayden, and members of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of SB 1518, the Oregon Caregiver Wage Protection Act.

My name is Alice Longley Miller, and I'm here on behalf of SEIU Local 503. We represent thousands of homecare and personal support workers across Oregon. These workers show up every day to help seniors and people with disabilities live safely and with dignity in their own homes. We care deeply about this workforce, and we're here today because their basic labor protections are under threat.

We are asking the legislature to pass this bill in response to threats from the current federal administration. The U.S. Department of Labor has proposed a rule change that would strip federal minimum wage and overtime protections from more than 3 million home care workers nationwide. The proposed rule would rescind an Obama-era regulation that extended Fair Labor Standards Act coverage to home care workers—protections most other workers have had since 1938.

I want to be clear about something: Oregon workers represented by our union would be protected through their collective bargaining agreements. But, we want to make sure that all care workers in Oregon have the same basic protections that are afforded to other workers. Our union knows that care work is essential to families and our economy overall, and we must push back on any attempt to strip hard fought worker protections from this workforce.

This is fundamentally an issue of equity. Home care workers are 85% women and two-thirds people of color. That's not a coincidence. When Congress passed the Fair Labor Standards Act in 1938, domestic workers were deliberately excluded. The exclusion of this workforce from basic labor protections has roots in racism and sexism, and for decades, we've been working to undo that legacy. As PHI researcher Kezia Scales told NPR last week, rolling back these protections signals that home care workers "aren't deserving of basic employment protections." We cannot go backward.



Labor advocates warn that taking away wage protections will drive even more workers out of an industry that already sees annual turnover of about 80%. PHI estimates the home care workforce will need to add 681,000 jobs over the next decade just to keep up with our rapidly aging population. Taking away labor protections right now simply doesn't make sense.

Oregon has been a national leader in protecting care workers. Our 2015 Domestic Workers Protection Act was designed to extend fair wages and overtime eligibility to homecare and domestic workers. But Oregon's laws reference federal definitions, and if those definitions change, Oregon workers could unintentionally lose the protections they have today.

SB 1518 is a straightforward fix. It decouples state law from federal definitions under attack and ensures that homecare and domestic workers will continue to earn at least Oregon minimum wage and qualify for overtime after 40 hours a week—or 44 hours for live-in workers. It provides clarity for BOLI enforcement and protects workers' ability to recover unpaid wages.

This bill does not create new requirements. It simply maintains the status quo in Oregon, regardless of what happens at the federal level. We do not anticipate a fiscal impact.

As one home care worker said: "This is a job, and we have to be recognized as workers." Oregon recognized that over a decade ago. SB 1518 ensures we keep that promise for all care workers in our state.

I urge your support. Thank you.

References

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- PHI. Research on home care workforce demographics, turnover, and employment projections. <https://www.phinational.org/>
- U.S. Department of Labor. "Application of the Fair Labor Standards Act to Domestic Service." Proposed Rule, 2026.