

February 4, 2026

Dear, Chair Taylor, Vice-chair Hayden and the members of the committee,

For the record, my name is Willis Homann, I am the Director of Government Relations and Communications for the Oregon School Employees Association. OSEA represents over 25,000 educators across the state at nearly every level of Oregon's public education system, including K-12 schools, Head Starts, Community Colleges, ESDs and Parks. We stand in strong support of SB 1519 with the proposed -2 amendment which would provide workers with benefits equal to the sum of 75% of the injured worker's weekly wage, for the portion of wages below 75% of the state average weekly wage (SAWW), and 65% for any wages above 75% of the SAWW while maintaining the total benefit cap at 133% of the state's average weekly wage.

The current statute provides workers with time loss benefits equal to 66 and $\frac{2}{3}$ of their average weekly wage or the state's average weekly wage, whatever is less. The formula used to calculate the weekly benefit is based on a tax bracket for higher income workers that ends up penalizing low-income workers who pay a lower tax rate. That means, they often get paid less than what they would actually receive if they were working.

Classified school employees are the most diverse and lowest-paid workers in Oregon's public education system. OSEA started its 'Work Shouldn't Hurt' campaign over a decade ago to bring attention to the growing fact that our school employees are getting injured on the job. Since we started that campaign, we have seen this issue only get worse as students need more support than ever before, while our schools lack sufficient staffing and support to meet the increased need. But we often find that when a classified school employee faces an injury, they often cannot afford to take time off. This is not only dangerous for the worker, and increases the likelihood of re-injury, but also leaves our school staff to pick up the slack while recovering from injury.

This legislation provides workers with peace of mind during an already stressful time. Removing this burden allows workers to focus on getting better and not having to worry about other stressors can speed up their healing process while also preventing re-injuries in the future.

We urge a yes vote on SB 1519, thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

Willis Homann, OSEA Director of Government Relations and Communications