



DISABILITY RIGHTS OREGON

March 3, 2015

Mr. John Mohlis and Mr. Guy Boileau, Co-Chairs
Management-Labor Advisory Committee
Oregon Department of Consumer and Business Services
PO Box 14480
Salem, OR 97309-0405

Dear Co-Chairs Mohlis and Boileau:

I am writing to inform you that Disability Rights Oregon opposes Senate Bill 649 because we are concerned that the legislation harms workers who have a disability.

DRO is the federally-funded *Protection and Advocacy* organization for Oregon. Its mission is to promote and defend the rights of individuals with disabilities through legal-based advocacy. A top priority for DRO and the Oregon disability community is for individuals with disabilities to achieve economic independence and full participation in the workplace. Workers with disabilities who successfully perform the duties of their job must not be discriminated against if they are hurt at work.

We do not quarrel with the current law that says that workers' compensation benefits can sometimes be reduced if a legally recognized pre-existing condition exists.

Senate Bill 649, however, would open the door to state-sanctioned discrimination against a person who has a vulnerability associated with his or her disability. On Page 4 lines 22-24 and line 36, the bill would massively expand the definition of a pre-existing condition to include "predisposition." When applied to workers with disabilities, this change is likely to result in the denial of honestly earned benefits after years of quality performance on the job.

As the Management-Labor Advisory Committee deliberates over workers' compensation legislation, we urge you to reject this discriminatory piece of legislation.

Sincerely,

Bob Joondeph
Executive Director