

**WORKERS' COMPENSATION  
MANAGEMENT-LABOR ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**Full Committee Meeting**

June 5, 2025  
10 a.m.–12 p.m.

***Committee members present via zoom:***

Scott Strickland, Sheet Metal Workers Local #16  
Patrick Priest, Citycounty Insurance Services  
Sara Duckwall, Duckwall Fruit  
Ryan Hearn, Roseburg Forest Products  
Stacy Lewallen, Fortis Construction, Inc. **(Absent)**  
Sarah Merrick, City of Salem Fire Department  
Kim Schlessinger, Samaritan Health Services  
Lorne Bulling, IronWorkers Local 29  
Margaret Weddell, Labor Representative  
Emily Rivas, Oregon Nurses Association **(Absent)**  
Andrew Stolfi, DCBS Director, *ex officio*

***Staff:***

Teri Watson, MLAC Committee Administrator  
Jeffrey Warburton, MLAC Assistant

<b>Agenda Item</b>	<b>Discussion</b>
<b>Opening</b> (00:01:57)	<b>Affirmation and Roll Call</b> Co-Chair Scott Strickland called the meeting to order, and shared an affirmation. Teri Watson called the roll of members. A quorum was present.
(00:03:41)	<b>Public comments</b> Dr. Vern Saboe, Oregon Chiropractic Association, made a public comment regarding SAIF's comment during <a href="#">MLAC Subcommittee on Access to Care</a> . He referenced a 2021 Workers' Compensation Research Institute (WCRI) study, noting a 61% lower cost when injured workers treated exclusively with a chiropractic physician; this includes lower claims cost, lower time loss payments, and fewer drug prescriptions. He noted that WCRI is an independent agency with no chiropractic affiliations.
(00:08:45)	<b>Review minutes - May 1</b> Sara Duckwall moved to approve the minutes from May 1. Margaret Weddell seconded the motion, and the motion passed. Ryan Hearn and Co-chair Strickland abstained.

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**Department updates**

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**Workers' Compensation Board case law updates – Lauren Eldridge**

- (00:09:57) Lauren Eldridge gave an update on two cases, Eugene Walters and Steven G. Hall, where it applied Oregon Supreme court's decisions in previous court cases. The Board awarded workers full permanent disability benefit, noting 10 percent impairment was sufficient to meet the material cause standard for accepted condition. In both cases, one Board member dissented.

**Workers' Compensation Division (WCD) updates – Teri Watson; Follow-up – Workers' Benefit Fund (WBF), [Comparison of Retroactive Reserve Reimbursements to Consumer Price Index](#)**

- (00:14:47) Co-chair Strickland showed his appreciation for the presentation, noting it was informative to know how the wage index is to inflation, and what the data shows.
- (00:15:30) Sara Duckwall asked about the WBF transfer status. Andrew Stolfi noted that the DCBS budget bill passed the Ways and Means subcommittee, but that it does not include the WBF \$15 million transfer to Oregon Bureau of Labor & Industries (BOLI). The transfer is set to another budget bill, the time and the exact amount is unknown.
- (00:18:52) Sara Duckwall asked for a presentation of the purpose of the transfer funds brought before MLAC. Director Stolfi noted that there had been a presentation in March on the WBF, and that the funds will be used for one-time general operational administrative expenses for BOLI's workload.
- (00:21:03) Co-chair Priest mentioned that it seems that the WBF has uses for workers' compensation, and that MLAC is charged with oversight of the WBF, and later asked for the dollar amount impact of the transfer. Kelli Borushko, DCBS Senior Economist, answered that in 2020, due to the pandemic, the number of claimants decreased while the average weekly wage increased. As a result, the retroactive reserve increased artificially in 2022, and will level off eventually. She continued that despite this, the information does not affect the budget. There are projections of the WBF that are absorbable to BOLI's transfer at this time.
- (00:26:55) It was clarified that the WBF presentation occurred during the meeting on March 6.
- (00:27:25) Sara Duckwall requested for MLAC to be part of the discussion in the future when funds from the WBF are transferred. Co-chair Strickland expressed his understanding, but noted that the transfer does not seem outside of statute. MLAC might lack authority over the Governor's budget allocations and is kept informed through WBF reports, like the March 6 presentation.
- (00:28:39) Ryan Hearn asked if MLAC would be interested in designing rules around WBF transfers. Co-chair Strickland expressed that he does not see the need to address this right now. He also noted that MLAC might not have statutory authority and
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might have appropriate discussion during the WBF reports. Ryan Hearn expressed concerns about the WBF being used in areas outside of workers' compensation.

(00:31:36) Margaret Weddell asked for clarification on where in the statute MLAC has the authority to review the transfer, referring to ORS 656.790, as statutes are open to interpretation.

**MLAC calendar website**

(00:33:00) Teri Watson presented the [MLAC calendar website](#) showcasing upcoming MLAC events. Scott Strickland suggested signifying the specific reports by frequency so it stands out. Members approved the page.

**Off-site meeting on Sept. 15 with Central Oregon Safety & Health Conference in Bend**

(00:35:41) WCD Administrator Matt West announced that on Sept. 15 MLAC will join the Central Oregon Safety & Health conference. WCD will have a booth during the day of the conference to encourage attendees to attend the MLAC meeting taking place later in the afternoon.

(00:37:41) Sara Duckwall will not be available for the September 15 meeting. MLAC members are not expected to attend the conference. The August meeting will be virtual for MLAC members that will not be able to travel to Bend.

(00:39:58) Administrator West asked members for their opinions about the format of the off-site meeting and gave a suggested of a townhall format.

**SB 533 (2013) Managed Care Organization “come along” providers report for 2024**

(00:43:18) Matt West reported on [2024 MCO “come along” providers](#), noting that there were three MCOs operating in Oregon. One primary physician was terminated due to failure to comply with the MCO terms, affecting one worker. He later clarified that MCOs are only required to report the denials and not the number of “come alongs” that are granted.

(00:45:14) Co-chair Priest brought back the WBF discussion, noting that ORS 656.790, as mentioned by Margaret Weddell, indicates that MLAC has a role in the balance of the WBF. Co-chair Strickland responded that it seems that the statute does not include MLAC's authority to advise on the governor's budget as it relates to the WBF, but rather its authority over changes to specific programs or an increase in funding.

(00:47:24) Director Stolfi suggested having a more detailed legal discussion over the WBF with the co-chairs. He explained that statutorily in regards to MLAC's role in programs funded by the WBF, the current transfer is a legislative transfer of funds is not tied to a specific program.

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(00:50:52)	<b>MLAC subcommittee updates:</b> <b>Access to care</b> Kim Schlessinger updated that the scope and objectives document has been drafted. She continued that first couple of meeting have been exploratory; looking at reports, and research and data. The goal is to identify short and long term solutions. Kim Schlessinger mentioned that in the next couple of weeks provider feedback heard.
(00:53:42)	<b>Average weekly wage</b> Co-chair Strickland updated that the subcommittee is reviewing the historical analysis of 66 2/3 and a policy discussion of its reasoning to see if it is still meeting its goals. The subcommittee will assess if there is a better way to achieve the policy and the impact of the potential change.
(00:56:19)	It was clarified that the co-chairs of the Average weekly wage subcommittee are Scott Strickland and Stacy Lewallen.
(01:05:22)	<b>Upcoming meetings – No meeting in July 2025; Aug. 7 meeting will be virtual</b> Sara Duckwall and Co-chair Priest expressed that they preferred that the next MLAC meeting on Aug. 7 be postponed to late August.
(01:06:15)	Co-chair Strickland expressed his appreciation to Director Stolfi for his hard work and engagement in MLAC. He congratulated Director Stolfi on his next position.
<b>Meeting Adjourned</b>	Co-chair Strickland adjourned the meeting at 11:05 a.m.

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\*These minutes include time stamps from the meeting video found here:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hV8afs7-8YU>

\*\*Referenced documents can be found on the MLAC meeting information page here:  
<https://www.oregon.gov/DCBS/mlac/Pages/2025-meetings.aspx>