

WORKERS' COMPENSATION
MANAGEMENT-LABOR ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Full Committee Meeting

September 15, 2025

4:30 p.m.–5:30 p.m.

Committee members present:

Co-chair Scott Strickland, Sheet Metal Workers Local #16

Co-chair Patrick Priest, Citycounty Insurance Services

Sara Duckwall, Duckwall Fruit **(via zoom)**

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

Sean O'day, interim DCBS Director, *ex officio* **(via zoom)**

Staff:

Teri Watson, MLAC Committee Administrator

Baaba Ampah, MLAC Assistant

Agenda item	Discussion
Opening	Affirmation and roll call
(00:01:57)	Co-Chair Scott Strickland called the meeting to order, and shared an affirmation. Teri Watson called the roll of members. A quorum was present.
	Public comments
(00:01:42)	No Public Comment
	Presentation – Management-Labor Advisory Committee (MLAC)
(00:02:37)	WCD Administrator Matt West thanked the event sponsors and gave a brief history of MLAC.
(00:10:56)	MLAC members, along with interim ex officio Sean O'day, introduced themselves and shared their backgrounds.
	Q&A
(00:31:45)	An audience member asked about Managed Care Organization's (MCO) and the possibility of providing more options to workers to have quicker access to care (ATC). Administrator West mentioned that ATC is a hot topic across the nation, including workers' compensation. He mentioned that the committee has an ATC subcommittee.

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- (00:33:35) Co-chair Strickland noted that MLAC has an ATC subcommittee, which was formed after a stakeholder presented an MCO bill to MLAC, with Emily Rivas and Kim Schlessinger as its co-chairs. Kim Schlessinger noted that the subcommittee has had different stakeholders in healthcare share their experience with the barriers to care. The subcommittee has a list of issues, which will be refined, and the subcommittee will present their recommendations to the full committee. Emily Cronan stated that ATC is highly complex, with barriers ranging from provider participation to rural access. She emphasized tackling smaller and immediate administrative problems or rulemaking while continuing long-term conversations to be proactive in solving problems and maintaining ATC.
- (00:37:10) Ryan Hearn praised the ATC subcommittee's work and noted that ATC problems are especially severe in rural areas, where workers often travel long distances for treatment. He mentioned that a common trend in the subcommittee is billing and processing issues which create barriers. Teaching people at the ground level how to access workers' compensation is a huge opportunity. Emily Cronan added that ATC extends beyond workers' compensation and reflects broader issues such as healthcare workforce shortages and the complexity of the system. ATC is primarily about having providers who understand the workers' compensation system, the workers themselves, and types of injuries. She continued that the ATC subcommittee is looking at the intent of ATC and setting itself as a model for larger health care systems.
- (00:39:43) Administrator West discussed MLAC's Average Weekly Wage (AWW) subcommittee, which is aimed at the temporary disability rate of 66 2/3 and insuring adequate income replacement for lower-wage workers while they receive treatment. Co-chair Strickland added that the subcommittee shows how MLAC is more multi-partisan than bipartisan, because it brings the opinion of multiple stakeholders. The subcommittee was created after a stakeholder bill (SB705, 2025 session) on wage replacement was referred to MLAC for data-driven analysis. Two proposals were presented: one from AFSCME (American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees) and another from the Associate General Contractors (AGC) in partnership with Oregon Business and Industry (OBI). Both proposals orbit on the idea that if 66 2/3 is not enough, how can a new model be implemented that address the concerns about low-income workers. He noted that the issue is very complex, but depending on how it is approached, the multifaceted stakeholder concern might not be properly addressed. All subcommittee information can be found on the MLAC/AWW subcommittee website.
- (00:44:45) An audience member asked if there has been discussion about revisiting large-scale reforms, similar to Mahonia Hall, or simplify the workers' compensation system, given that the complexity of the system may deter providers from participating. Matt West answered that MLAC's role is to keep policy
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discussions continual and workers' compensation statuses ongoing since Mahonia Hall, through broader reform on major issues.

(00:46:09) Co-chair Strickland added that Mahonia Hall reforms were designed to prevent the need for groundswell changes again, and MLAC's role is more of a facilitator than a legislative body — bringing diverse stakeholders together, fostering discussions, addressing issues as they arise through engagement, data, and stakeholder ideas.

(00:48:22) An audience member noted that access to care delays affects the Central Oregon community as well and is excited to hear about the solutions of the subcommittee. Co-chair Strickland showed his appreciation to the audience member, noting that the value of holding meetings outside of Salem is to hear about local issues. He continued that solutions for workers' compensation issues could also inform broader healthcare systems.

(00:50:00) Ryan Hearn also showed his appreciation and encouraged virtual attendance to express concerns. Emily Cronan noted that access is more complex, as it encompasses navigating the system effectively, achieving outcomes that benefit workers and their communities, and supporting employees and businesses.

(00:51:20) Tammy Banny, Chair of the SAIF Board of Directors, showed her appreciation to MLAC members and expressed the importance of access to care for workers, especially first responders. She noted SAIF's focus on prevention and safety, highlighting both physical and mental wellness. Tammy Banny expressed that SAIF's Board deeply cares about access to care and wants to make sure that MLAC has a financially sound, modernized organization that is able to weather these challenges.

Upcoming meetings: Oct. 2 and Nov. 6, 2025, virtual meetings.

(00:53:37) Co-chair Strickland shared closing remarks, encouraging audience engagement during MLAC meetings, both virtually and in person.

Meeting Co-chair Strickland adjourned the meeting at 5:35 p.m.
Adjourned

*These minutes include time stamps from the meeting video found here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A-11-5nnG54>

**Referenced documents can be found on the MLAC Meeting Information page here:

<https://www.oregon.gov/DCBS/mlac/Pages/2025-meetings.aspx>