

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

Full Committee Meeting

Dec. 4, 2025

10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Committee members present:

Co-chair Patrick Priest, CIS Trust

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

Emily Cronan, Oregon Nurse Association

Ryan Hearn, Andunil Industries

Stacy Lewallen, Fortis Construction, Inc

Sarak Merrick, City of Salem Fire Department

Kim Schlessinger, Samaritan Health Services

Sean O'Day, DCBS Director

Committee members absent:

Lorne Bulling, IronWorkers, Local 29

Sara Duckwall, Duckwall Fruit

Margaret Weddell

Staff:

Teri Watson, MLAC Committee Administrator

Stacie Sanders, MLAC Assistant

Baaba Ampah, MLAC Assistant

Agenda Item	Discussion
Opening (00:00:22)	Affirmation and roll call Co-chair Scott Strickland called the meeting to order, and shared an affirmation. Teri Watson took roll call of members, and a quorum was present.
(00:02:00)	Co-chair Patrick Priest moved for the approval of the Nov. 6, 2025 minutes. Sarah Merrick seconded the minutes. The motion passed.
(00:04:29)	Workers' Compensation Board (WCB) updates Lauren Eldridge, Managing Attorney at WCB presented on an Oregon Supreme Court case update, Teitelman v. SAIF, 374, Or 271 (2025) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <u>WCB Quarterly Report Presentation</u>
(00:11:40)	Workers' Compensation Division (WCD) updates WCD Administrator Matt West shared personnel updates. Alana Cox, currently DCBS Building Codes Division administrator, will be the acting DCBS deputy director starting Jan. 1, 2026. Stacie Sanders joined WCD in

a job rotation as committee support from DFR. Baaba Ampah moved into a job rotation at CSD.

(00:13:06)

MLAC 2025 accomplishments

WCD Administrator Matt West went over the MLAC 2025 accomplishments. Matt thanked MLAC members for all the work that they participated in this year. It was a very busy year.

Co-chair Strickland took a moment to thank WCD, MLAC members, stakeholders and members of the public for all their help this year.

(00:17:56)

MLAC Workplan Updates 2025
MLAC Workplan List of Topics

Teri Watson gave a short summary of the updated workplan.

(00:18:55)

Emily Cronan confirmed that the Healthcare Summit related to the Access to Care subcommittee will be after the short session.

(00:19:53)

Co-chair Priest asked for clarification about MLAC's role in the Healthcare Summit. MLAC and workers' compensation are a piece of the Healthcare Summit, but it will require a much larger conversation with additional stakeholders to address all of the access to care issues in Oregon.

Co-chair Strickland responded that this is very much a living document to be re-visited and opened up the discussion for questions.

(00:21:19)

Emily Cronan stated she would like to push having a regulatory tour with OSHA, DFR, and WCD to better understand the process before the summit. She would like to see a workplan that prioritizes and reflects actionable items that MLAC can make progress in or accomplish within the year, and to move lofty goals from the workplan to a wish list. She also stated that she would like the workplan to include a checklist where MLAC can check off completed goals at the end of the year.

(00:25:10)

Co-chair Strickland explained that the regulatory perspective allows stakeholders and others to understand the different regulatory responsibilities of WCD, OSHA, and DFR (Insurance); and how these agencies coordinate and collaborate with each other.

(00:26:37)

Co-chair Patrick Priest suggested putting dates in the workplan to help with priorities. He heard in another meeting he attends about a concept to expand the role of "physician assistants" within workers' compensation.

(00:27:38)	Emily Cronan stated the idea to expand access to care would be to increase the number of providers that are available, especially in rural areas where PA's and NP's take on primary care roles.
(0:28:13)	Co-chair Priest shared that the regulatory tour seems important as we get invitations to rulemaking and other things that seem like by-products to what MLAC has approved. The MLAC calendar has the annual event dates for 2026.
(00:28:17)	Co-chair Strickland mentioned a possible reformatting of our work list including dates and sorting higher priorities, recurrent and "wish lists", making it easier for stakeholders and others to understand.
(00:30:12)	Sarah Merrick asked as we wrap up 2025 and move into 2026, will we discuss in January 2026 what we plan to cover next year. Teri replied that we start the legislative process in January 2026, session will end on March 8, and we can get back to the workplan activities after the short session.
(00:31:12)	Co-chair Strickland commented that part of Co-chair Priest's point on recurring themes or issues, having the legislative dates is helpful.
(00:31:46)	Co-chair Priest stated that it is important that MLAC members participate in the MLAC legislative meetings as decisions are made.
(00:32:05)	Emily Cronan replied it would be beneficial if the workplan could mirror the schedule, especially for stakeholders, even if we don't meet the goals. We can shoot to accomplish the goals for Q3 and reassess what Q4 will include, and delineate MLAC's capacity.
(00:32:57)	Teri Watson agreed and stated the next MLAC meetings are scheduled for Jan. 8, Feb. 5, and March 5, and the legislative meetings will start weekly. Legislative meetings are scheduled weekly on Jan. 22 and Jan. 29, Feb. 12, Feb. 19, and Feb. 26. Teri will cancel meetings if not necessary and session is over on March 8.
(00:34:22)	Stacy Lewallen reiterated Emily's thoughts on having targeted goals. Do we want to set any actions? Maybe the Healthcare Summit be (1) and the Regulatory Tour (2). Making a very short list of realistic goals to be completed and having another track for the "wish list" items.
(00:35:23)	Teri Watson stated that during legislative session, meeting to review legislations is the main focus of the meetings.
(00:35:49)	Emily Cronan asked if is it reasonable to state that we would have a summit with all the participatory stakeholders at the beginning of Q2 when the majority of our capacity is spent on legislative review in Q1, or are we

	looking at using Q2 for the time and planning the healthcare summit in Q3?
(00:38:03)	Stacy Lewallen stated if the group wants, the three top goals could be the healthcare summit, regulatory tour, and community outreach days. And then we could assign dates to them now and have a plan.
(00:39:35)	Emily Cronan stated that it makes sense to have the regulatory tour prior to the summit and hopefully find solutions for complex problems.
(00:42:11)	Emily Cronan continued sharing that there are significant issues as far as access to care for Oregonians in general. The more planning we have, the more engagement we can get from some of the stakeholders we haven't seen be participatory.
(00:43:11)	Co-chair Priest inquired about the healthcare industry, explaining that we chose the OSHA conference because of the safety and health attendees. He asked if there are any similar meetings in the healthcare industry where we could attend and do outreach.
(00:43:37)	Emily Cronan welcomed all to attend the biannual Oregon Nurses Association (ONA) convention which will be held in Eugene May 2026. We can look at getting involved with other healthcare industry conferences.
(00:48:17)	Co-chair Priest commented that from a workers' compensation perspective, when we talk about access to care, it's complicated to be a work comp provider and that limits people. So, maybe us doing outreach and hearing the difficulties are would be valuable.
(00:49:23)	<p>Emily Cronan stated that while hearing from direct care providers is valuable, the challenge is deciphering what decision makers with large health system organizations see as complexities with accepting workers' compensation. It is important to hear from those making decisions related to an organization's decision makers. This is why we need participation from the larger health systems. We will need to map out the additional stakeholders needed for the Healthcare Summit.</p> <p>Sarah Merrick stated that leading up to the 2027 session bills are going to continue to center around healthcare and access to care as it affects every single industry and every single Oregonian.</p>
(00:50:56)	Stacy Lewallen asked if there is a healthcare convention timeline for any of the groups Emily mentioned? If so, could we have a second outreach day trip in Q4 to connect with the healthcare industry. She suggested that members of MLAC coordinate attendance at the Q4 outreach event as to not over extend members.

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- OSHA conference is in Pendleton June 2026, Q2
 - Regulatory Tour, Fall 2026, Q3
 - Healthcare Summit planning and event July-September 2026, Q3
 - Fall rural healthcare outreach, Q4

- (00:51:55) Barb Anderson, Ombuds for Oregon Workers, shared about the outreach coming up this next year regarding access to care. Her office is seeing an influx of workers who are refusing to attend medical appointments due to fear of ICE.
- (00:53:25) Co-chair Strickland committed to do some outreach to members to make sure we have representatives that feel comfortable speaking in the interest of community members at the outreach events.
- (00:54:25) Sean O'Day, DCBS director, stated from the OSHA perspective that we hold an annual Spanish language conference, however this year we went with a handbook approach. Given the federal regulatory environment, we are working with the Mexican Consulate to help meet with the community in a safe space along with our worker advocates. We are working with are partners on providing resources to the community.
- (00:56:28) Emily Cronan spoke about providers and insurers as it relates to telehealth and the reimbursement regulatory process and making sure we have a system set up relating to the federal crisis.
- (00:59:02) Co-chair Priest indicated that CIS has a virtual physical therapy program and it has been very successful. It started a couple years ago and the outcomes have been very good for injured workers.
- Co-chair Strickland brought up earlier discussion on intimidation from certain employers and others for filing claims and preserving exclusive remedy and making it accessible.
- Emily Cronan brought up broadening the scope of people we should connect with as far as the home care association and community providers.
- (01:00:47) Co-chair Strickland reviewed upcoming meetings and stated that meetings are virtual pending the move to Department of Revenue. (Stacy Lewallen has a conflict March 5.)
- Co-chair Strickland mentioned the holidays being hard for folks and making sure we are in a place to listen. Making people aware of the suicide support line text 988, concerning mental health.
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**Upcoming meetings – Jan. 8, Feb 5, and March 5, all virtual.
Upcoming legislative meetings: Jan. 22 and 29, Feb. 12, 19, and 26, all virtual.**

**Meeting
Adjourned**

Scott Strickland adjourned the meeting at 11:02am.

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

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

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

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