

SB 705 (2025)

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ABOUT US

Our union represents over 40,270 workers across the state in both public and private sectors and we believe in economic and social justice for all Oregon workers and their families.





UNSAFE ON THE JOB

*Union members demand increased
workplace safety*

OREGON AFSCME

WORKER SAFETY SURVEY

AFSCME conducted a comprehensive survey in the fall of 2024, receiving an overwhelming response. More than 500 workers responded and the majority say they are working in systems so broken that they are dealing with physical violence, threats, and life-threatening conditions. They exposed chronic understaffing, alarming gaps in safety protocols, inadequate training, and insufficient support after incidents—and they demanded change. Oregon AFSCME shared the survey's findings to illuminate the reality faced by workers across all sectors. This powerful report serves as both a wake-up call and a rallying cry, urging state leadership and managers to prioritize worker safety and take immediate action to protect those on the frontlines.



RESPONSES

“[Insurer] is a nightmare. Their only interest is getting you back to work whether you're healed or not.”

-Hospital Worker

“They [my employer] pay a lot in insurance for this, it did not help me at all. I only got 60% of my wages and came back to work too early because of this.”

-County Worker

“The fact that work comp treated like I was the perpetrator and not the one who was abused. I have been treated like I do not matter my injuries. Do not matter my existence. My income, my family household everything in my health getting my health back in order it is like I do not matter.”

-Classified Staff



OREGON AFSCME'S WORKER SAFETY PACKAGE:

EVERY WORKER DESERVES SAFETY ON THE JOB

Improving safety protocols for public service workers

No one policy solution will solve the worker safety crisis. Collectively, these legislative actions will increase safety and force employers to take workplace safety more seriously across sectors.

Increase Safety and Staffing in Oregon's Behavioral Health System

INCREASED STAFFING AT OREGON STATE HOSPITAL

Oregon AFSCME supports the Governor's Recommended Budget / Oregon Health Authority requests that will increase safety and care for patients and reduce risk for workers. The request includes 136 mental health positions to reduce overtime for LPNs and RNs, increased forensic evaluation service positions, electronic monitoring of patient vital signs for enhanced care, increased security screening at OSH, and community navigators to help patients get the appropriate level of care when they leave OSH.

INCENTIVES TO INCREASE STAFFING IN THE STATEWIDE BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SYSTEM (RECOMMENDATIONS OF HB 2235)

House Bill 2235 passed in 2023 and declared a state of emergency in Oregon's behavioral health system stemming from severe shortages, systemic barriers and unmet community needs and set up a workgroup to look deeper at the issue and make recommendations to the 2025 legislature. The group found high turnover and burnout among workers and difficulty for employers to recruit to the levels they need to operate safely and well. We support \$20 million in rate increases for non-profit providers and \$20 million in grant funding for retention programs. We also support funding to increase enhanced apprenticeships, on-the job training and wrap-around services through the United We Heal program and for OHA to look at ways to improve retention through increased wages, health care benefits and safety standards with an eligible labor-management training trust.

HB 4002 – BEHAVIORAL HEALTH TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS

After the stabbing death of worker Haley Rogers in 2023, Oregon AFSCME called for action by the state legislature to improve worker safety. In 2024, HB 4002 established a task force to look at how to prevent future injury and harm to workers. The recommendations include requiring written safety plans specific for each worksite, specific safety planning for lone workers, and assessments of the built environment to maximize safety and mitigate vulnerabilities; increased safety and worker rights training, including deescalation best practices and improved documentation of critical incidents; making available state grants for providers to do safety assessments and safety improvements/retrofitting; improving patient assessments to determine the appropriate level of care; modeling the cost of increasing minimum staffing above one person and the recommended safety improvements.

Safe Staffing for State Employees

DOC HEALTHCARE STAFFING BILL – SB 24

Oregon's Department of Corrections (DOC) healthcare staff are suffering from chronic short staffing. There are simply not enough people to support timely healthcare service to adults in custody (AICs). They are also

required to do more than their counterpart supporting patients in the general public, caring for a population with complex physical and behavioral health needs. SB 24 requires DOC to conduct a fair market salary assessment biennially, prior to each statewide bargaining session; creates minimum staffing ratios for DOC healthcare staff.

SACU MANDATORY OVERTIME LIMITS

Workers at the Stabilization and Crisis Unit are facing unsustainable levels of mandatory overtime, leaving them exhausted and burned out. This bill will improve care for the people they serve. If an employer schedules an employee to work a mandatory overtime shift in any month in which the employee has already worked one mandatory overtime shift, the employee may refuse to work the additional overtime shift, unless there is a collective bargaining agreement that states otherwise or a letter of agreement is signed by parties involved.

INVEST IN A SAFER PUBLIC WORKFORCE

High vacancy rates and understaffing continue to plague the state workforce. According to the February 2024 Audit, "Ongoing Workforce Crises and Disruption Demand Strategic Workforce Planning," Oregon state government struggles to maintain a workforce sufficient to efficiently and effectively meet objectives. It faces simultaneous crises of actual and looming retirements, chronic staffing shortages, increased workloads, and employee burnout. The situation is especially chronic at the Oregon Department of Corrections where hundreds of hours of overtime a month have become the norm. It is clear that the state salary pot needs to provide reasonable cost-of-living increases to increase their competitiveness in the marketplace as employers and ensure state agencies to deliver essential services to Oregonians.

Hospital Safety

HOSPITAL WORKPLACE SAFETY – SB 537 / HB 2552

Jobs in hospitals and in home health & hospice settings have become more difficult and dangerous over the last few years as short staffing, increased acuity and other pressures have fueled a rise in workplace violence. This legislation defines workplace violence in statute, and prevents violence in hospitals. It promotes common sense safety improvements, supports victims of workplace violence by offering post-incident interviews, trauma counseling, first aid, and wage compensation when violence disrupts the remainder of a worker's shift and increases transparency through improved reporting which provides data to the legislature to assess progress and help inform future policymaking.

Improve Workers' Compensation to Increase Healing

REDUCE PAY DISPARITY FOR LOW-INCOME WORKERS – SB 705

Workers compensation is based on a formula that penalizes low-income workers hurt on the job, leaving them with a lower percentage of their take home pay than higher income workers. SB 705 will change the compensation formula for workers earning below the state average weekly salary of \$998.84 for an individual and \$1,059.99 for a family of four. This will allow them to focus on healing and pay the bills during their recovery.

ADD SACU/OSH TO PTSI ASSUMPTION – SB 606

Due to the increased acuity of the populations they serve and chronic understaffing, workers at Oregon State Hospital and the Stabilization and Crisis Unit at Oregon Department of Human Services are regularly exposed to unsafe conditions and trauma on the job, but often are refused workers' compensation to help them heal. SB 606 would create a presumption that PTSI and other stress-related conditions are work-related for the purposes of workers compensation benefits. These behavioral and mental health workers work to ensure the wellbeing of Oregon's most vulnerable and we need to ensure that we are taking care of workers by providing them with this benefit.

COST OF LIVING INCREASES

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Inflation spikes in 2021 have contributed to significant changes in costs, to the point that Oregonians now need to pay almost \$10,000 more in a year — nearly 13% of their annual income — to maintain their 2019 standard of living, according to CSI Oregon’s 2024 Inflation Misery Index report”

- \$3,659 more annually on housing and utilities.
- Food costs \$4,808 more annually
- Gasoline costs Oregon households \$817 more

For families this means about 20.6% – Due to excess inflation since 2019, the average household in Oregon must now spend must spend \$22,034 more per year to consume at 2019 levels. This means that the average household has effectively lost 20.6% of their income to inflation.



WC MODERNIZATION

- Cost of living has significantly increased since 1971
- The 2002 adjustment in ORS anticipated that this higher limit would benefit higher paid workers who would find themselves getting lower workers' compensation time loss replacement than what their take home pay was.
- When workers are out on workers compensation;
 - They can lose their private healthcare to care for themselves and their families
 - Miss out on retirement contributions which puts a financial burden on them in present time and in the future

SB 705

REDUCE WORKERS' COMPENSATION PAY DISPARITY

PROBLEM

The formula for calculating workers compensation based on after-tax pay insurance is unfair because it assumes all workers pay the same rates. That means workers compensation pays a lower percentage of take home pay to people who earn less - the very people who are living paycheck to paycheck.

Today a worker in a family with two children who earns \$28,496 a year loses 31% of their income but a worker earning \$83,200 loses only 17%.

WAGES BELOW SAWW REPLACED AT 80%

+

WAGES ABOVE SAWW REPLACED AT 66.66%

=

TOTAL BENEFIT AMOUNT, CAPPED AT 133% OF SAWW

EXAMPLE:

A: Worker who makes wages below the SAWW will be replaced at 80%.

B: Worker who makes wages above the SAWW will receive 80% for monies below the SAWW in addition to 66.66% of wages above SAWW, with a cap on benefits of 133% of the SAWW.

HOW SB 705 WILL HELP

SB 705 will change the compensation formula for workers so that their workers' benefit that is closer to their net average weekly wage of compensation of the worker pre-injury in order for them to focus on fully healing. The bill would increase time loss benefits from 66.6% to 80% of the states average weekly wage (SAWW), maintaining the cap on benefits at 133% of the states average weekly wage for temporary total disability claims.

