

WORKERS' COMPENSATION
MANAGEMENT-LABOR ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Full Committee Meeting

Jan. 8, 2026

10:00am

Virtual meeting

Committee members (present via zoom):

MLAC members and Organization they represent
Co-chair Patrick Priest, CIS Trust
Co-chair Scott Strickland, SMART, Local 16
Sara Duckwall, Duckwall Fruit
Sarah Merrick, City of Salem Fire Department
Ryan Hearn, Anduril Industries
Stacy Lewallen, Fortis Construction, Inc
Margaret Weddell, Labor Representative
Kim Schlessinger, Samaritan Health Services
Emily Cronan, Oregon Nurses Association

Committee members absent:

Sean O'Day, Director DCBS

Staff:

Teri Watson, MLAC Committee Administrator
Jeff Warburton, MLAC Assistant

Agenda Item	Discussion
Opening (00:00:00)	Affirmation and Roll Call Co-chair Priest called the meeting to order, and shared an affirmation. Teri Watson called the roll of members. A quorum was present.
 (00:02:47)	Public Comments No public comments.
 (00:03:44)	Review Dec. 4, 2025 Minutes Sarah Merrick moved to approve the minutes. Stacy Lewallen seconded the motion. The motion passed, and Margaret Weddell abstained.
 (00:04:54)	Department Updates – Workers' Compensation Board – Cathy Ostrand, Assistant Managing Attorney Cathy Ostrand indicated that the case law update will be provided at a later MLAC meeting. Cathy provided four rulemaking activities updates with WCB: 1. The Workers' Compensation Board (WCB) amends OAR 438-015-0019 (Cost Bill Procedures; Assessed Attorney Fees When the Claimant

Prevails in a Cost Bill Dispute) to increase the amount a claimant may recover for expenses and costs after finally prevailing against a claim denial, consistent with House Bill (HB) 2799 (2025). The bill increased the cap from \$1,500 to \$3,500. The bill and the rule are effective Jan. 1, 2026.

2. The Board received a proposal in August related to the same rule from SAIF Corp. and Oregon Trial Lawyers Association (OTLA) regarding the process and documentation for cost bill submission. The Board appointed an advisory committee to address the concept and started meeting in December. A final report will be presented to the Board for consideration.
3. The Board amended its procedure rules regarding rulemaking to allow notice for intended rulemaking actions by email in addition in addition to or instead of paper mail.
4. The Board completed its five-year review of the rule that allows the claimant to request bifurcation of the attorney fee determination from the underlying claim in cases on board review. An advisory committee and the public also reviewed the rule. The review concluded that the rule had its intended effect and there continues to be a need for the rule.

Cathy concluded that the rule update information is available on the [Oregon Workers' Compensation Board website](#).

WCD – Teri Watson

(00:07:49)

Teri Watson announced that Lorne Bulling resigned from MLAC after accepting a position as Chief of Staff to Portland city Councilman Zimmerman. Co-chair Strickland thanked Lorne Bulling for his contribution, noting the valuable perspective he brought. Co-chair Priest joined in the appreciation.

Teri Watson stated the MLAC offsite meeting will be at the ASSP/Oregon OSHA conference in Pendleton on Tuesday, June 16, 2026. More information will be coming soon.

2026 Legislative Overview Presentation – Theresa VanWinkle, DCBS Legislative Director

(00:11:20)

Theresa VanWinkle delivered the [2026 legislative overview presentation](#).

(00:22:24)

Co-chair Priest asked about MLAC's role in legislative concepts (LC) versus bills. Theresa Van Winkle responded that an LC (example LC 178) is a document used to introduce a bill, that will be assigned a bill number. MLAC may make recommendations based on a legislative concept, and direct Teri Watson to ensure the final bill language aligns with the recommendation. If amendments occur after a bill number is assigned, MLAC may review it, and WCD will ensure any MLAC recommendations are conveyed in an amendment to the bill.

(00:24:33) Emily Cronan was noted as present. It was clarified that Kim Schlessinger was accidentally missed during roll call but was present for the meeting.

LC 178 Presentation - Susan Allen, AFSCME Political Coordinator

(00:25:20) Susan Allen [presented LC 178](#), thanking AGC (Associated General Contractors), OBI (Oregon Business & Industry), and SAIF for their collaboration, and noted that work continues on the LC to make sure the concept aligns with the subcommittee recommendation.

(00:26:28) Sara Duckwall asked whether AFSCME received the bill analysis, and requested that questions or clarification points asked for in the analysis be addressed at a future meeting. Susan Allen answered that the bill analysis has been received, and AFSCME will circle back with stakeholders to make sure the concept matches the subcommittee recommendations.

(00:27:49) Ryan Hearn raised concerns about how the LC will affect the Workers' Benefit Fund (WBF) long term, as it increases cost an estimated \$25 million. Susan Allen responded that it is difficult to project the impact until they have the bill language that reflects the subcommittee's recommendation. Once they have the bill language, more accurate technical information will follow.

(00:29:11) Matt West, WCD Administrator, also responded that WCD is working with DCBS research team to try to get an estimated impact on the WBF. The \$25 million reflects systemic costs identified by NCCI's analysis and there are increased costs that would also affect smaller programs, such as supplemental disability, which provides disability payments for workers with multiple jobs. He concluded that once the bill language is finalized, the research team will get an estimated impact on the WBF.

(00:30:33) Co-chair Strickland showed his appreciation to AFSCME, AGC, OBI, and other stakeholders for their collaboration and effort.

(00:31:54) Matt West announced that this bill is scheduled to be previewed by the Senate Labor and Business Committee meeting next Tuesday, Jan. 13, at 11:30 a.m. and can be accessed virtually.

(00:33:21) Susan Allen ended her presentation of LC 178.

Teri gave a brief update on upcoming meetings.

Upcoming meetings –Feb. 5, and March 5, all virtual.

Upcoming legislative meetings - Jan. 22, Jan. 29, Feb. 12, Feb. 19, and Feb. 26, all virtual.

(00:34:56) Although some meetings are before the legislative session, agenda items should be expected. Co-chair Patrick Priest and Kim Schlessinger will not be present during the Jan. 22 meeting.

(00:36:20) Stacy Lewallen moved to adjourn the meeting, and Margaret Weddel second the motion. The motion passed.

(00:36:47) Co-chair Priest adjourned the meeting at 10:36 a.m.

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

[DCBS Management-Labor Advisory Committee \(MLAC\) Jan. 8, 2026 Meeting](#)

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

<https://www.oregon.gov/dcbs/mlac/Pages/2026-meetings.aspx>