



Press Release

For Immediate Release

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Senate passes bill to provides civil rights protection to unpaid interns

“Interns deserve equal protection under the law,” says Labor Commissioner Brad Avakian

PORTLAND—Unpaid interns will enjoy new civil rights protections under a bill passed today by the Oregon Senate 29-0.

House Bill 2669, co-sponsored by Rep. Lew Frederick and Rep. Greg Matthews (at the request of Labor and Industries Commissioner Brad Avakian), extends workplace protections to interns who are discriminated against because of age, sex, religion, sexual orientation, marital status or other protected class. The measure does not extend the employer relationship, but does provide new protection from retaliation and hostile work environments.

Oregon Labor Commissioner Brad Avakian today praised the effort to protect Oregon’s workforce.

“Interns deserve equal protection under the law,” said Avakian. “This bill closes the intern loophole by providing important civil rights protection for those about to enter the workforce or who’ve recently changed careers. I appreciate the hard work of Representatives Frederick and Matthews making the bill a reality.”

A broad coalition supports the bill, including the AARP, Urban League, Oregon Student Association, American Association of University Women and Oregon Council on Civil Rights.

“In today’s economy, employers expect new employees – including recent graduates and those just entering a new field – to bring meaningful work experience to a position,” said Rep. Lew Frederick. “This bill protects the civil rights of Oregonians and strengthens safeguards for our state’s workforce.”

The bill previously passed the House floor 59-0 and passed unanimously out of the Senate General Government Committee. HB 2669 now heads to Governor John A. Kitzhaber for signature.

“I remember clearly going through legislative orientation and being shocked to learn that unpaid interns were not covered by important civil rights protections,” said Rep. Greg Matthews. “Today’s vote will help ensure that unpaid interns can gain valuable work experience without facing a hostile work environment.”

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