



July 2, 2020

To the chairs and members of the Management-Labor Advisory Committee:

Good morning. For the record, my name is Jeff Anderson and I serve as the Secretary-Treasurer of United Food & Commercial Workers Local 555. I am here today on behalf of more than 25,000 members in Oregon and SW Washington from industries ranging from grocery and pharmacy to meat processing and healthcare. We are Oregon's largest private sector union.

Our members are on the frontline. We ask the committee to recognize the need for protections for the essential workers who are showing up every day during this crisis to support Oregon. The first of these critical needs is a recognition that workers who are putting their lives on the line during this crisis deserve to have a rebuttable presumption for pandemic exposure in our Workers' Compensation system.

For Local 555 this hits home. Our members are vulnerable. Nationally, 238 members of our union have succumbed to COVID-19 - with nearly 10,000 testing positive and approximately 30,000 in quarantine after exposure. This includes workers in Oregon.

We know there are 66+ cases in over 25 locations represented by Local 555. Based on market share statistics we can estimate the true numbers are at least double that, or worse, within our industries. At Pacific Seafood in Newport, which is unrepresented, there are at least 124 confirmed cases in one location. It is important to remember that people worked for months without adequate PPE, risking exposure. This cannot be ignored.

These are not individuals who you would think are at risk. They are dedicated workers who have kept critical supply chains moving, people fed, and healthcare workers who have cared for patients, even at their own peril.

We are not doing enough. We need to make sure adequate protections are put in place when workers are staying on the job. This includes UFCW members. They ensure public access to groceries and the medicines people need. They package and process our food. They are risking exposure to Coronavirus for public benefit. Many retail workers come into contact with hundreds of people a day. Other states are acting quickly to move policies forward to protect workers, including access to Workers' Compensation and testing. Oregon should do the same.

Workers answered the call after Governor Brown's March 23 Stay Home Stay Safe Executive Order. We are asking you to stand with us to ensure these same workers are covered in the event that they contract the virus.

Over the years this committee has helped craft carefully considered approaches to many issues. Protecting Oregon's workers is essential, especially now. Oregon's Workers' Compensation program is a balanced system that provides an exclusive remedy, which will keep these claims out of court. Local 555 urges you to help ensure the system provides the assurances these essential front-line workers need during the pandemic.