John A. Kitzhaber, MD
Governor

Oregon Advocacy Commissions Office
"Advocating Equality and Diversity"
1819 SW 5th Ave., Portland, OR 97201
O 503.302.9725/F 503.473.8519
Email: oaco.mail@oregon.gov

OR Commission on Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs
Stephen Ying, Chair
Mari Watanabe, Vice Chair
Legislative Liaisons:
Sen. Michael Dembrow
Rep. Gene Whisnant

OR Commission on Black Affairs
James I. Manning Jr., Chair
James Morris, Vice Chair
Legislative Liaisons:
Sen. Rod Monroe
Rep. Lew Frederick

OR Commission on Hispanic Affairs
Alberto Moreno, Chair
John Haroldson, Vice Chair
Legislative Liaisons:
Sen. Chip Shields
Rep. Jessica Vega Pederson

OR Commission for Women
Stephanie Vardavas, Chair
Jeanne Burch, Vice Chair
Legislative Liaisons:
Sen. Laurie Monnes Anderson
Rep. Betty Komp

Staff
Lucy Baker, Administrator
Nancy Kramer, Executive Assistant

Testimony in support of HB 2005
Monday, February 16, 2015

House Committee on Business and Labor

Chair Holvey, Vice-Chairs Barton and Kennemer, Representatives Barreto, Doherty, Esquivel, Evans, Fagan, Heard, Nosse and Weidner:

Too many workers are forced to choose between sick time and a paycheck they desperately need. Nationally, one in six workers reports having been fired for taking time off work to care for a sick child or family member, or for their own illnesses, and the fear of job loss for taking sick time affects well over half of Hispanic workers and three out of four African-American workers.

The Oregon Commissions on Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs (OCAPIA), Black Affairs (OCBA), Hispanic Affairs (OCHA) and the Commission for Women (OCFW) strongly support HB 2005, a bill offering all employees in Oregon the opportunity to earn paid sick time while they work. This bill provides a state-wide standard so workers all across Oregon can both provide for and responsibly care for their own health as well as the health of their families. Portland and Eugene have joined other family-friendly cities in the nation by requiring that employers let employees earn sick time while they work. The Advocacy Commissions feel strongly about this issue because of its significant impact on our communities: women and people of color - many of whom are low-wage earners - and their children.

The following Oregon statistics highlight the issue in our state:

- 47% of Oregonians working in the private sector lack access to any paid sick time (now that Portland and Eugene have passed ordinances).
- 71% of low-wage workers in Oregon lack paid sick time.
- Hispanic workers are significantly less likely to have paid sick days than other workers. About 62% of Hispanic workers in Oregon lack paid sick time.
- Lower-wage earners are less likely to have paid sick days. 82% of Oregonians earning $65,000+/year have access to paid sick time, as compared to 29% of Oregonians earning less than $20,000/year.
- 83% of people working in "Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations" in Oregon lack paid sick time, potentially creating an immense public health hazard as food service workers are forced to bring their potentially contagious illnesses to the workplace in order to earn their paychecks.
- 22% of children live in Oregonian households headed by single mothers who are challenged by the lack of sick time to care for their sick children or other family members.

This bill is vital if we want to reduce health disparities by socioeconomic status in Oregon. When workers earn sick time, everyone benefits. First, paid sick days are good for public health. Above and beyond the direct risks of contagion as described above, often low-income workers postpone care (preventive and even urgent) because they cannot afford a day off from work. The inevitable result is more emergency room visits because their conditions have worsened in the absence of timely care. Second, paid sick time

is good for families. Workers without paid sick time face a brutal choice when illness strikes: either they go to work sick, or send a sick child to school or daycare; or they stay home, lose pay, and risk job loss or workplace discipline. ***Finally, but of immense importance, paid sick days are good for business.*** The loss of productivity due to illness is high across the country, estimated at $160 billion annually. However, when workers are offered sick leave benefits, some economists who have studied the issue believe that this policy helps reduce unemployment and strengthens the economy. In San Francisco, where all workers have been earning sick leave since a 2007 ordinance, fully 2/3 of businesses support this policy. This is not only an Oregon problem but also a matter of national concern.

Paid sick time as an economic issue, a public health issue, a family issue, and a business issue. We thank the Legislature for its work in crafting a potential solution and for providing the Advocacy Commissions with the opportunity to contribute testimony on this bill.

Sincerely,

Stephen Ying, Chair, OCAPIA

James I. Manning, Jr., Chair, OCBA

Alberto Moreno, Chair, OCHA

Stephanie Vardavas, Chair, OCFW