

Chair Taylor and Members of the Senate Workforce Committee:

When employers and workers come together and solve problems through negotiation, it is better for business, for workers and for our state. Central to our negotiations is our workforce. In Oregon's booming construction industry, we pride ourselves on having a highly trained, skilled workforce for our projects. Union building and construction trades workers graduate from union apprenticeship programs and receive a high level of specialized training. Apprenticeships are jointly funded by unions and contractor associations, requiring zero taxpayer investment. Attacks on unions would dampen these valuable training programs, leaving us with less qualified workers to complete the jobs Oregon's economy depends on. We expect a lot from our employees, and our reputation often rests in their hands. That is why it is in our best interest to ensure the women and men of Oregon's building and construction trades have safe working conditions, decent benefits, and fair wages.

We live and work in a state that values the rights of workers, but we are not immune from attacks on workers' rights and on unions. Across the country, including here in the Pacific Northwest, we have seen policies introduced that attack union security agreements. These attacks are a deceptive effort to further erode standards and drive down wages. They do not promote employee freedom despite misleading names like "right to work." Make no mistake, these attacks would have a very negative impact on our industry.

By attacking workers' rights and unions, our business would not be as strong and we would be in a race to the bottom in terms of economic fairness. Without strong unions, employers who do not pay decent wages or provide the best equipment and safety gear will be more competitive. That is dangerous for an industry where workplace safety is paramount.

SB 1040 is a simple bill that affirms the status quo of private sector labor relations, and that is good for our business. It represents another opportunity for business and labor to work together to keep Oregon strong and safe for working people and their families and a state where economic development utilizes the best workforce possible.

