In June 2017, Oregon became the first state to pass legislation requiring retail, hospitality, and food service employers with more than 500 employees to give workers their schedules at least one week in advance. The legislation also requires workers to be given a 10-hour break between shifts or receive extra pay. After passage of the bill, Gov. Kate Brown stated on Facebook that “… Oregon lawmakers came together … to help workers balance life and their job with the first statewide Fair Work Week bill.” The law is set to go into effect in July 2018.

The legislation was passed in response to industry practices that create unpredictable schedules and therefore unpredictable income and financial instability. The Economic Policy Institute, or EPI, noted in a press release that workers in the retail, hospitality, and food service industries often see schedules that vary “from week-to-week at a rate more than double that of full-time workers.”

EPI also found that “[a]t least 10 percent of the [U.S.] workforce has an irregular or on-call, often unpredictable, work schedule, and an additional 7 percent work split or rotating shifts … Such workers are also much more likely to report conflict between their work and family lives.”

A Better Balance, an organization that promotes work-life balance in the form of sick and family leave, flexible work, and other similar policies, maintains that unpredictable and unstable work schedules make things such as “arranging childcare and transportation a daily struggle, and reduces opportunities to take classes or work a second job.”

Oregon’s legislation comes after similar ordinances have been passed by cities such as Seattle, San Francisco, and New York. Individual companies have comparable policies as well. For example, Starbucks’s scheduling practices include posting schedules 14 days in advance, refusing to have “on-call” scheduling, and requiring managers to schedule workers’ back-to-back opening and closing shifts with at least 8 hours in-between.

There are vocal opponents to state-sponsored changes—namely business owners and groups, believing such legislation creates more problems than it seeks to solve.

Many business owners submitted comments in opposition to Oregon’s legislation. One constituent who owns several Subways submitted an email in opposition. Of paramount concern was the possibility of closing stores and no longer being able to support her family.

“We never dreamed our local government would work so hard to ruin small family run business [sic], destroy our retirement and put our children’s livelihood in jeopardy,” the Subway owner wrote in the email.

With both vocal proponents and opponents, it is likely that fair work scheduling legislation will continue to be introduced and debated at both the state and local level.