



May 13, 2015

Testimony to House Business and Labor Committee

Provided by: Paloma Sparks, Legislative Director, Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries

The Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries (BOLI) appreciates the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 468 A, which gives the Bureau the ability to issue orders of garnishment to collect on final orders and judgments.

As you know the Bureau of Labor and Industries enforces anti-discrimination laws that apply to workplaces, housing and public accommodations; enforces wage and hour laws; educates employers to avoid unnecessary worker complaints; and partners with labor, business and other organizations to develop a highly-skilled, competitive workforce in Oregon.

This legislation will help the agency to be more cost effective and timely in protecting workers and ensuring people who have violated the law do not evade their responsibilities.

The Bureau conducts complex and in-depth investigations into violations of anti-discrimination and wage and hour laws. Investigators weigh all evidence to determine if there is sufficient evidence to support a finding of a violation. If there is sufficient evidence, the parties are offered an opportunity to settle the case or continue on to an administrative hearing. If the administrative law judge and the Commissioner agree that an individual violated the civil rights or wage and hour protections under the law, a final order is issued.

When an order for wages has been finalized or a settlement reached employers are required to deliver payment for those wages due to workers. Although most employers follow the rules, some will begin moving assets around or changing business names to avoid payment of wages. In the end, after taking the courageous step to file a claim for wages, the worker never gets paid in those cases. A recent survey of the history of wage and hour cases alone, revealed over \$30 million in unsatisfied judgments. The bulk of that is unpaid wages due to workers.

Other agencies have the ability to issue garnishments, so that debts owed to the state are paid efficiently. Ultimately, having debts go unpaid hurts Oregon's economy and costs the state needless time and money in attempted collections efforts. This tool would help the Bureau to move more quickly to collect the wages due to workers. The Bureau worked on amendments with Associated Oregon Industries to clarify that garnishment efforts will not begin until there is a final order and the time to file a notice of appeal has passed.

I urge you to support SB 468 A and give BOLI key enforcement tools. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

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