



TO: Ways and Means Subcommittee on Transportation and Economic Development
FR: Nancy Haque, Executive Director, Basic Rights Oregon
DA: April 1, 2019
RE: SB 5516 Budget for the Bureau of Labor and Industries

Basic Rights Oregon is a non-profit organization that has been advocating for the rights of gay, lesbian, transgender, bisexual and queer Oregonians for over 20 years. We work statewide in order to ensure all Oregonians can live and work free of discrimination. We support the Budget for the Bureau of Labor and Industries, especially those portions that impact public engagement, civil right investigations and technical assistance for employers.

Basic Rights Oregon receives between 10-15 calls or emails per month from Oregonians asserting some form of discrimination. The majority of these calls are regarding employment discrimination and a close second are calls regarding health insurance discrimination. We support BOLI's proposal to increase investments in an additional investigator and intake coordinator. These roles are central to carrying out the main mission of the civil rights division and simply have not had adequate FTE to meet the demands of the agency.

Basic Rights Oregon also refers people to the BOLI website, both from an intake perspective for those seeking redress for discrimination, but also through our Fair Workplace Project if employers have questions about how to meet the obligations of Oregon law. The current website is antiquated and hard to use. BOLI is overdue for this sort of an upgrade and we encourage the legislature to fund this project as proposed in SB 5516.

And finally, Basic Rights Oregon would like to see policy changes regarding the practice of charging people for their own case records in wage and hour and civil rights cases. These records should be digitized and therefore easier to either send or receive. It is so inefficient for the limited investigator staff to spend time copying and sending these records. And the cost and wait time can be a barrier for people seeking their own case files. It is past time to modernize the case records management at BOLI and SB 5516 will greatly contribute to doing so.

In close, Basic Rights Oregon views BOLI and the Civil Rights Division as one of the most important providers of state programs in Oregon, both for employers and employees seeking a fair work place with a culture of respect for all workers. We support the investments sought in SB 5516 and urge the Committee to approve them.

Nancy Haque
Executive Director