Testimony in Support of House Bill 5015
March 10, 2021
Joint Committee on Ways and Means
Subcommittee on Transportation and Economic Development
Russell Lum

Good morning Co-Chairs Beyer and Gomberg and members of the subcommittee. My name is Russell Lum, I am a political organizer for Oregon Nurses Association. We represent 15,000 nurses — including RNs and advanced practice nurses — and allied health workers. I urge you today on behalf of Oregon Nurses Association and the Nurse Practitioners of Oregon to pass HB 5015, providing general funds to the Bureau of Labor and Industries.

BOLI's charge, BOLI's role, amounts to an indispensable, lion's share of the State's work to ensure fair and lawful treatment of Oregon's workers. BOLI is an agency our members rely on, and broadly so does Oregon's total legal and regulatory framework. Oregon should be a state where cheating workers is rare or nonexistent — where discriminating against workers is rare or nonexistent — and the legislature agrees, having expanded the law, in session after session, on civil rights, workplace protections, and anti-discrimination.

Adequately funding BOLI is the way to make real these commitments that have been made. Community members and advocates who needed and won the legal protections are counting on them to change conditions on the ground and counting on have meaningful recourse when they're wronged. BOLI needs to be funded to carry out its enforcement role in issues of wages, housing, equality under the law, and more.

The Governor's recommended budget embraced the need. From the budget, ONA is pleased to see potential provision of nine new Civil Rights positions in the agency and a new position with a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion lens on BOLI's work in apprenticeships.

Please join Governor Brown and Oregon nurses and many advocates in placing high priority on shoring up BOLI as it takes on critical work. From frontline essential workers to the broad public, we know we all stand to gain from resolute action from the legislature on this issue. Thank you.