

February 23, 2021

Dear Chair Power and Members of the House Subcommittee On Civil Law,

I am writing to you today to urge you to oppose HB 2205. The potential for this bill to adversely affect hundreds of locally-owned businesses is vast as it would open the doors to private lawsuits for even the most minor mistakes (which are to be expected in such a rapidly-changing state of affairs with COVID-19 guidelines).

HB 2205 is similar to a California law, the Private Attorney General Act (PAGA), that has been disastrous for the state's businesses. Each year in California about 4000 PAGA lawsuits are filed against large and small employers, many for minor violations or mistakes. This is exactly what will happen to our local businesses if Oregon legislators pass HB 2205, either in its expanded form or limited to labor policy like California.

The Keizer, Salem, and Stayton-Sublimit Chambers of Commerce represent hundreds of members, businesses, and non-profits in every sector of our community. HB 2205 will impact every business, every non-profit, and nearly every employer in Oregon, subjecting liability exposure never envisioned when enforcement statutes were adopted. HB 2205 inappropriately shifts the responsibility of enforcing state law from state agencies to the courts. There is reason that state agencies are charged with enforcing state laws. There is significant rulemaking and interpretation that agencies conduct as they enforce laws. HB 2205 removes the nuance of those decisions from agencies and places it with our overburdened court system. Judges are not subject matter experts on the countless Oregon laws that agencies routinely enforce. And state agencies shouldn't be forced to dedicate finite state resources that could be used for education and enforcement to meeting the tight timelines for notice proposed by HB 2205.

I am very worried about what HB 2205 means for our local business community. These lawsuits will force employers large and small to either settle or risk hundreds of thousands of dollars if not millions litigating the case on the merits. Please don't open my business up to endless litigation. One baseless lawsuit could easily cost me my business.

It is unacceptable to burden local employers with this amount of liability and risk. HB 2205 will create lasting harm if it moves forward this session.

Please vote 'no' on HB 2205.

Respectfully,

Jennifer Lewis
Lewis Media Group