



Date: February 24, 2021

To: House Subcommittee on Civil Law

Re: OEA support for HB 2205, the Just Enforcement Act

Chair Power and member of the committee,

The Oregon Education Association represents 41,000 education professionals across the state of Oregon. From early learning to community college, from teachers to professors to education service professionals, OEA's members span the entire spectrum of education; and we strongly support HB 2205.

Over the years, our members – in partnership with legislators and community partners – have worked hard to pass dozens of laws aimed at improving working conditions, health, and the economic well-being of all Oregonians; particularly issues that meet at the intersection of racial, gender and economic justice. It is in support of these laws – and dozens of other critical worker-justice laws – that we also support HB 2205.

While Oregon has made massive positive steps in protections and support for working-class Oregonians, many folks still do not see the implementation of these laws in their places of employment. Wage theft continues, sexual harassment and discrimination remain, and complaints about these and more go uninvestigated. This is because, while Oregon's population has grown, the enforcement agencies that protect workers have not kept pace.

Oregon should work to support these agencies to ensure every complaint and person who files one gets the opportunity to see justice. However, it is also critical that we create more pathways for folks to seek justice and protect those people from retaliation at the same time. More, this is a critical equity issue. Those most likely to be affected, and in turn are affected the most by wage theft are more likely to be women, immigrants, and BIPOC workers. Folks who work in low-wage, and labor-intensive industries such as farm-labor, processing plants, meat packing plants, and frozen foods. In turn, issues like wage theft affect the community at every level, from decreased purchasing power for our local small businesses to decreased learning in our schools as children come to school hungry.

HB 2205 provides new ways for workers to seek justice, protects whistle blowers, and produces revenue for our critically underfunded agencies task with supporting Oregon's worker. Please pass it with a "do pass" recommendation.

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