



Smart policies for today's families.

DA: February 23, 2021
TO: House Subcommittee on Civil Law
RE: Support for House Bill 2205, The Just Enforcement Act

Chair Power, Vice-Chair Wallan, and Members of the Subcommittee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bill 2205. Family Forward Oregon supports HB 2205 to give workers the power they need to enforce their rights at work. As members of the Fair Shot For All Coalition we support this policy as part of the 2021 legislative agenda and our ongoing work to ensure racial, gender, and economic justice for residents in Oregon.

Family Forward Oregon is committed to advancing policies that support women and families and help them to achieve economic stability, including policies that directly benefit parents and young children. In recent years, we have supported the passage of paid sick days, the Workplace Fairness Act, and pregnancy accommodation for Oregon workers and more. However, over the past few decades, our state agencies charged with enforcing these important labor protections have experienced a steady decline in funding and resources.

Workers who are prevented from accessing their right to breaks, paid time off, and a safe workplace, or who are discriminated against at work have to overcome fear and risk retaliation to come forward. When state agencies do not have capacity to take on their cases, they are often left with no other avenues to address the harm done to them and there are not sufficient enforcement mechanisms available to them through private channels.

Furthermore, a lack of outreach, accessible information and a fear of retaliation for speaking out has left Oregon's most vulnerable workers--women, immigrants, and BIPOC workers--with little trust in the system that exists to protect them. Ensuring they have access to navigators through community-based organizations they trust will be essential to truly being able to access their rights.

Women, BIPOC, and immigrant communities across our state make up a greater portion of essential and frontline workers and are also most impacted by the crises of COVID, wildfires and the economic downturn. These crises have laid bare the problems that already existed in our workplaces.

The Just Enforcement Act would provide workers with more options to protect their rights in their workplace and will create a revenue stream for state agencies to increase enforcement capacity over time. Providing an avenue for workers to partner with trusted community organizations to file suits on the state's behalf would allow workers who fear speaking out alone and risking their jobs to have the community at their backs while they do so. Family Forward Oregon urges you to support HB 2205.

Sincerely,

Lisa Kwon
Policy Manager, Family Forward Oregon