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February 24, 2021

TO: Chair Power, Vice-Chair Wallan, and Members of the House
Subcommittee on Civil Law
RE: House Bill 2205, The Just Enforcement Act

My name is Maurice Rahming, and I am the President and General Manager of O'Neill Construction Group, Inc. I support **HB 2205 because it would give workers the power they need to enforce their rights at work.**

O'Neill Construction Group, Inc. is a general contracting enterprise that integrates self-performed electrical, masonry, carpentry and painting work with all aspects of construction management. The company began in 1998 as O'Neill Electric Inc., and electrical contracting enterprise, working throughout Oregon and the Pacific Northwest. Our core belief has always been that open and honest communication with our customers, vendors, and employees is what keeps the company's foundation growing stronger each day, in addition to professionalism and excellence in quality of work. O'Neill Construction Group is certified as a Minority Business Enterprise and a Disadvantaged Business Enterprise in Oregon.

Over the past few decades, our state agencies charged with enforcing important labor protections have experienced a steady decline in funding and resources, while the size of Oregon's workforce has grown. Compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic, wildfires, and an economic crisis, those agencies have been overwhelmed by complaints to which they do not have the capacity to respond.

As an example, the Bureau of Labor and Industries cannot be everywhere at once. As a result, businesses who skirt the law are able to get away with not paying a fair day's wage for a fair day's pay. This inevitably puts businesses like that of O'Neill Construction Group, Inc. at a disadvantage. Further, even when state agencies enforce workplace laws, companies rarely face penalties. In claims brought to the state between 2006 and 2019, only 1% of Oregon businesses found guilty of wage theft ended up paying penalties imposed by the state.

There is also the issue of workers not having the courage to report complaints and violations of the law due to the fear of retaliation from employers or having such complaints uninvestigated. To illustrate, in the current COVID-19 pandemic, a national survey found that Black workers were twice as likely to have experienced or witnessed retaliation for raising COVID-19 safety related concerns in their workplace, and twice as likely to have those issues remain unresolved. When state agencies do not have capacity to take on the cases of these workers, they are often left with no other avenues to address the harm done to them and the relevant businesses/companies are also not held accountable.

electrical
contractor;
commercial
residential
industrial

O'Neill Construction Group, Inc. prides itself on not only treating its workers with dignity and respect but investing in the long-term future of our community. However, in choosing to do right by workers and abide by the law, it sometimes remains at an economic disadvantage to businesses who do not comply with the law. Consequently, there is a growing need for enforcement of a law that all businesses are to abide by so workers can feel safe on the job and that would allow workers have a voice to enforce their rights when violated.

The enactment of the Just Enforcement Act will create a culture of compliance to level the playing field for small, medium, and large businesses who follow the law. In addition, it would provide workers with a voice in their workplace and create a revenue stream for state agencies to increase enforcement capacity. 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. O'Neill Construction Group, Inc. urges you to support HB 2205.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Maurice Rahming', is written over a horizontal line.

Maurice Rahming
President/General Manager

For: O'Neill Construction Group, Inc.