

**Testimony Submitted by  
Chris Coughlin, Policy Director  
Oregon Consumer Justice  
To the Senate Committee on Labor and Business**

February 4, 2025

**Re: Opposition to SB 481**

Dear Chair Taylor, Vice-Chair Bonham, and Members of the Committee:

For the record, my name is Chris Coughlin. I appreciate the opportunity to testify today on behalf of Oregon Consumer Justice in opposition to SB 481.

Oregon Consumer Justice (OCJ) envisions a vibrant future where all Oregonians live with dignity and abundance and experience health, joy, and economic opportunity. We work collaboratively across policy and advocacy, community engagement, and the law, to realize a more just and equitable Oregon where people come first. For too long, flawed systems and policies have stood in the way of this reality, with communities of color most often experiencing significant harm. Informed by consumer insights, OCJ works to make financial and business transactions reliably safe and supports Oregonians in knowing and exercising their consumer rights.

SB 481 undermines Oregon's consumer protection framework for lending products by introducing weak regulations for Earned Wage Access (EWA) offerings. The bill mirrors industry-driven legislation being introduced across the country which prioritizes corporate interests over consumer well-being. It exempts EWA products from state lending laws, fails to require wage verification, and exposes consumers to predatory fees, financial instability, and cycles of reborrowing.

Oregon legislators must uphold the state's commitment to protecting its residents from financial exploitation. Instead of adopting SB 481 as introduced, Oregon should prioritize policies that:

- Ensure EWA products comply with existing state lending laws.
- Require transparency in fee structures and prohibit exploitative practices such as tipping pressure and extra advance fees.
- Implement robust consumer protections to prevent reborrowing cycles and financial hardship.

We urge lawmakers to oppose SB 481. If Oregon chooses to lead in ensuring EWA products are regulated to support financial stability, this bill is not the vehicle as it would instead create new avenues for predatory practices. Rejecting SB 481 sends a clear message that Oregon values consumer well-being over industry profit.

Thank you for your consideration and your service in building the future that Oregonians deserve.