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To: House Committee on Labor and Workplace Standards
From: Martha Sonato, Oregon Law Center
Re: Support for HB 2957
Date: February 10, 2025

Dear Chair, Grayber, Vice-Chairs Muñoz and Elmer, members of the committee

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of HB 2957 on behalf of the Oregon Law Center (OLC).

Access to justice is a cornerstone of our organization's mission. Legal processes can be complicated, and people often need help understanding their rights. This is especially true for low-income Oregonians, who face more barriers when their rights are violated.

[HB 2957](#) supports access to justice by providing individuals with the time to seek redress in court after going through the Bureau of Labor and Industries.

What HB 2957 would change in the law:

Currently, Oregon law provides a five-year statute of limitations for claims related to:

- Discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, marital status, age, or expunged juvenile record (ORS 659A.030).
- Discrimination related to military service (ORS 659A.082).
- Discrimination based on disability (ORS 659A.112).
- Employer agreements restricting discussion of unlawful conduct (ORS 659A.370).

The bill would prohibit employers from seeking contractual agreements with employees to shorten these statutes of limitations. In addition, the bill would ensure that an employee's effort to resolve a complaint via the administrative process could not shorten a statute of limitations and an employee's opportunity for justice.

What this would mean for individuals seeking justice:

While individuals have five years to pursue workplace harassment and discrimination claims in court, the process can become restrictive if they first file with BOLI. If BOLI decides not to pursue the case, it issues a "right to sue" letter, after which the claimant has only 90 days or less to file in court regardless of the amount of time that remains

The Oregon Law Center's mission is to achieve justice for low-income communities in Oregon by providing a full range of the highest quality civil legal services.



Oregon Law Center

WORKING TOGETHER TO ACHIEVE JUSTICE FOR LOW INCOME OREGONIANS

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under the initial statute of limitations. If workers then miss this short deadline, they lose their right to take legal action.

We see this legislation as ensuring people have the same five-year time limit whether they go straight to court or start with BOLI. This change keeps the process fair and ensures no one is penalized for trying to resolve their case through BOLI first.

Additionally, by making it unlawful for employers to include terms in agreements that shorten the time workers have to file legal claims, we can support fair employment practices across Oregon. Many of our clients are low-wage workers who face challenges in finding legal help and understanding their rights. Often, they don't know they've signed agreements that limit their ability to take legal action against their employers—or they may not even know these agreements exist. Additionally, it raises concerns when employers, due to their greater bargaining power, impose restrictions on workers' rights, particularly given that employees depend on their jobs to support themselves and their families. HB 2957 would ensure that all workers—especially the most vulnerable—keep the full legal time, as provided by the Oregon legislature, to stand up for their rights.

All in all, HB 2957 makes sure everyone in Oregon has a fair chance to seek justice, no matter how they choose to handle their case. People shouldn't lose the opportunity to seek justice through court just because they started the process with BOLI. This bill helps protect workers—especially those who are most vulnerable—and ensures that everyone has the time they need to stand up for their rights.

We urge the legislature to pass HB 2957 to maintain fair and equal access to justice for all Oregonians.

Thank you,

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