

Date: February 20, 2025

To: Co-Chairs Woods and Gomberg & Members of the Subcommittee on Transportation and Economic Development
From: Hollie Oakes-Miller, American Federation of Teachers - Oregon
RE: Support for a fully funded BOLI, HB 5015

Co-Chairs Woods and Gomberg, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony. My name is Hollie Oakes-Miller, and I am writing today on behalf of AFT-Oregon, representing 18,000 education workers. Our union stands in strong support of fully funding the Bureau of Labor and Industries.

Our members are the backbone of education in Oregon, and they work hard to support their families, contribute to the economy, and build better communities. However, without a strong, fully funded agency to enforce labor protections, workers' rights—and everything they contribute—is at risk.

At AFT-Oregon, we've seen firsthand how disinvestment in BOLI has created an enforcement crisis. BOLI has fewer staff now than it did in the 1980s, despite significant growth in Oregon's workforce. This staffing shortage has led to unacceptable delays in investigating claims and allows wage theft, and discriminatory practices to continue unchecked.

At the same time, uncertainty at the federal level—underscores the urgency for Oregon to prioritize strong state enforcement of worker protections.

When BOLI is stretched too thin, the message is clear: workers rights are not a priority, and bad actors can exploit their workers without consequence. We cannot allow this to continue. Oregon's workers deserve an enforcement agency that is strong enough to ensure that the laws passed by the Legislature meant to protect them actually do.

Oregon has some of the strongest worker protection laws in the country, but without BOLI's enforcement, these laws are nothing more than words on paper. BOLI needs full funding to give these protections real power, and ensure no worker is left waiting months for their rights to be enforced.

Workers deserve better. Oregon deserves better. AFT-Oregon strongly urges you to fully fund BOLI and give the agency the resources it needs to uphold the rights of workers across the state.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Hollie Oakes-Miller
VP of Political Action
AFT-Oregon