



February 25, 2025

Co-Chairs Woods and Gomberg, and Members of the Subcommittee on Transportation and Economic Development,

My name is Cynthia Ramirez and I'm a Policy Associate with PCUN, Oregon's Farmworker Union. On behalf of PCUN, we are in strong support of HB 5015, relating to the Bureau of Labor and Industries (BOLI) 2025-2027 budget.

PCUN works to empower farmworkers and Latinx working families to improve their working conditions through community building, organizing, and policy advocacy. Our members live and work in the Mid-Willamette Valley, Oregon's vibrant agricultural region. PCUN was founded by 80 farmworkers to fight against exploitation at work and the effects that come with that. Since then, our members have fought to ensure important victories such as raising the minimum wage, earned sick leave, farmworker overtime, and safe working conditions, which protect all of Oregon's farmworker families across the state. These policies have been stepping stones to ensure our farmworkers are being advocated for and protected in Oregon.

Despite farmworkers being labeled as essential workers during the many crises across our state, the workers we represent are often treated the opposite. We frequently receive calls from workers who have been denied sick pay, have unpaid wages, are experiencing harassment and often fear reporting violations due to fear of retaliation. When workers turn to us, we work together with our partners, Centro de Servicios para Campesinos and the Northwest Workers Justice Project, to serve as a bridge between the worker and the agency, and support the worker in moving through the process to submit their claim and gather the necessary information to complete their case.

However, due to limited resources and an increasing workload, our state agencies do not have the resources to investigate claims in a timely manner. This has profound impacts for workers living paycheck to paycheck such as our farmworker members who are already some of the lowest paid workers in the state.¹ BOLI is experiencing an increasing number of wage claims, overwhelming its already limited capacity. While Oregon's workforce has grown, the number of BOLI employees has declined. It is crucial for BOLI to have proper funding to meet the needs of Oregonians and protect them from further harassment, discrimination, and wage theft.

To ensure a smoother process, more resources need to be allocated to BOLI so they have the capacity to ensure workers rights are being protected, especially our most vulnerable workers who play vital roles in our state. We recognize BOLI's critical role in our state and strongly

¹ <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/farming-fishing-and-forestry/agricultural-workers.htm#tab-5>

support HB 5015. For BOLI to function properly and support Oregonians across the state, the agency budget must be supported. For many Oregonians working paycheck to paycheck, a timely resolution of matters has a profound impact in their lives and their families. We strongly urge you to support HB 5015.

Thank you,

Cynthia Ramirez
Policy Associate
PCUN