



To: Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Transportation and Economic Development

From: Anthony Castaneda, SEIU Local 503

Date: February 25, 2025

RE: **Support for HB 5015 BOLI Budget**

Dear Co-Chairs Woods and Gomberg and members of the subcommittee,

My name is Anthony Castaneda, and I am testifying on behalf of SEIU Local 503 in **support of the 2025-2027 agency request budget developed by the Bureau of Labor and Industries (BOLI) and reflected in the Governor's Recommended Budget**. SEIU Local 503 represents over 72,000 workers across the State of Oregon and more than 100 dedicated employees at BOLI who work tirelessly to meet the agency's core mission.

You as lawmakers can be proud of the laws you have enacted to make Oregon one of the best states for workers. However, it is not enough to have laws on the books, those laws need to be enforced. When there is a backlog of claims or cases, that means that workers and their families have to wait longer to get what they are owed.

BOLI plays a critical role in ensuring workers have a place to go when they have wage & hour complaints or have experienced discrimination. Workers can rely on BOLI to enforce civil rights law in public spaces and in housing. Employers turn to BOLI for guidance in complying with the law and for support in recruiting a highly skilled workforce to grow Oregon's economy. This work cannot happen if the agency doesn't have sufficient staff to meet the demand – which has seen a marked increase over the past several years.

In order to better serve Oregon workers, we support the investments described will in the BOLI agency budget:

- Address backlog with additional position authority and reclassification of positions - Recruitment and retention are key to meeting the agency's needs. Without additional positions our members will continue to face chronic burnout because of the size of their caseloads.

- Update technology to do its job - the current case management system wastes time and fails to track data in a way that helps workers. Give our members the tools they need to do the work effectively and efficiently – and we'll improve outcomes.
- Build a sustainable future - We need a BOLI that works now and in future biennia. The agency has been underfunded for decades. There is an opportunity to put it on sound footing. If we expect BOLI to enforce worker protections in the future, they should be funded now and for the future.

Additionally, if you look at the written testimony, you will read testimony from our members who turn the gears at BOLI. You will read testimony from a Compliance Specialist, Investigator, and Mediator. For example, Ibrahim Coulibaly is an investigator with the Civil Rights Division and President of the BOLI SEIU sub local. He will share his experience as an investigator and the need for additional capacity to address the backlog of cases. It's important to adequately staff the office to quickly resolve issues as they arise.

Lastly, I ask that the members of this committee support SB 5015 and key areas to invest in the critical work that the frontline employees at BOLI do every day.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Anthony Castaneda