

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

My name is Brooke Hill, and I appreciate the opportunity to submit testimony on behalf of Oregon AFSCME. Our union represents 39,000 workers across the state in public and private sectors, and we strongly support full funding of the Bureau of Labor and Industries. Creating a strong, sustainably funded state agency in support of workers is essential to maintaining a thriving and prosperous workforce in Oregon. Our members work incredibly hard to support their families, contribute to the economy, and build better local communities. With no recourse when they face harassment, lost wages, or discrimination, workers have significantly less collective power across all industries. Strengthening worker protections means strengthening local communities, economies, and organizations statewide.

Disinvestment in BOLI sends a clear message to Oregon workers that their rights are not a priority.

AFSCME has seen personally how disinvestment in BOLI has created an enforcement crisis. BOLI's decades-long staffing shortage has led to unacceptable delays in investigations, with some workers waiting months to hear from a caseworker after filing a complaint. This delay has allowed wage theft and discrimination to continue unchecked and often unmonitored, with little to no accountability. Federal confusion and uncertainty with the transition to a new administration only increases the urgency for Oregon to prioritize strong state enforcement of worker protections. Oregon's workers deserve an agency strong enough to ensure that all the laws passed by the Legislature meant to protect them actually do so in practice. Oregon has some of the most comprehensive worker protection laws in this country because of the strong work completed by this body in past sessions, but without real, structured accountability, these laws are just words. Prioritizing our invaluable workforce, and giving workers a voice when they feel they are being mistreated, begins with a strong, fully funded state agency to enforce these protections when necessary.

Fully funding BOLI provides a successful enforcement mechanism to ensure that no workers fall through the cracks, regardless of who you are. BOLI needs full funding to give these protections real power, and ensure no worker is left waiting months for their rights to be enforced. Oregon workers deserve better. AFSCME members strongly urge 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 and consideration of this important issue. We urge you to support HB 5015 and fully fund the Bureau of Labor and Industries.

Sincerely,  
Brooke Hill (she/her)  
AFSCME Political Team