

Submitter: Aidan Watkins

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Judiciary

Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB426

Dear Chair Prozanski, Vice-Chair Thatcher, and members of the committee,

My name is Aidan Watkins, and I am writing in strong SUPPORT of SB 426. As a construction worker in Oregon, I have witnessed how wage theft and labor exploitation drags down wages, hurts our communities and makes the construction industry so unattractive that it's turning away young people from careers in the trades.

Numerous national studies have shown that the construction industry, particularly in the residential sector, is a hotspot for abuse and exploitation. Under-the-table fraud and misclassification in construction is costing the state over \$112 million each year—money that could go toward supporting essential public services like schools, roads, and public safety.

If the State of Oregon is serious about protecting workers and putting an end to wage theft, we need to support SB 426, which will hold all market participants accountable for wage theft up and down the contracting chain.

We can't keep relying on the government to fix this problem alone. The industry itself must take responsibility and support contractors who treat their workers fairly. Reducing access to justice is not the way to combat wage theft, paying wages is.

**PROTECT OUR WORKERS, PROTECT OUR FAMILIES, AND PROTECT OUR COMMUNITIIES.**