

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

I am writing to express my strong support for HB5015, which would provide essential funding for the Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries (BOLI), particularly its Civil Rights Division.

The stark reality is that without adequate enforcement, civil rights protections become hollow promises. BOLI's recent data paints a troubling picture: a 278% increase in civil rights questionnaires over the past decade, with a backlog of 1,200-2,000 cases awaiting processing. Behind each of these statistics is an Oregonian facing discrimination, waiting months or years for justice while experiencing immediate economic hardship. In fact, BOLI reports that 66% of complainants are experiencing economic hardship while their cases remain unresolved.

This crisis of enforcement particularly impacts our most vulnerable communities. When workers face discrimination but cannot access timely investigation and enforcement, they often face a devastating cascade of consequences:

- Immediate loss of income leading to housing instability
- Inability to afford essential medical care
- Forced return to discriminatory workplaces due to economic necessity
- Long-term career and economic impacts that can take years to overcome

The \$3,284,024 requested for the Civil Rights Division represents more than just a budget line item - it represents Oregon's commitment to making civil rights enforcement a reality. This funding would:

- Enable BOLI to hire additional investigators and intake staff
- Dramatically reduce wait times for case processing
- Allow for proper investigation of potentially meritorious claims
- Restore faith in our civil rights enforcement system

Current statistics show BOLI is only able to collect on 41% of wages due in violation cases. Without proper funding, this pattern of inadequate enforcement will continue, effectively giving bad actors permission to discriminate without consequence. No Oregonian should have to choose between enduring discrimination and being able to pay their rent.

HB5015 represents an opportunity to demonstrate that Oregon's commitment to civil rights goes beyond words to meaningful action. I strongly urge you to support this critical funding that will help ensure all Oregonians have access to real protection under our civil rights laws.

Thank you for your consideration.

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