



A STRONG VOICE FOR OREGON'S WORKERS

February 25, 2025

Senator Aaron Woods, Co-Chair
Representative David Gomberg, Co-Chair
Members of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means
Subcommittee on Transportation and Economic Development

RE: Support for a Fully Funded BOLI - HB 5015

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

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of the Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industry's budget request for the upcoming biennium. My name is Graham Trainor, and I am the president of the Oregon AFL-CIO. The Oregon AFL-CIO represents over 300,000 workers across the state in every sector and is a voice for all workers in the legislative process. You may have noticed that today is our 2025 Oregon Labor Lobby Day so there are hundreds of workers and union members in the State Capitol. We are proud to have fully funding BOLI's budget as a key piece of our 2025 legislative agenda.

BOLI's mission is integral to supporting Oregon's working families, and its services provide essential protections for workers in various industries. From ensuring employers are paying workers what they're owed, to regulating registered apprenticeship programs to make sure quality training and employment opportunities for apprentices are being provided as promised and protecting workers who experience discrimination and harassment, BOLI is a vital agency that helps to hold employers accountable while enhancing the well-being of the workforce in our state.

We recognize that a strong, well-resourced BOLI is fundamental to protecting workers, ensuring equitable opportunities, and maintaining an economy where fair wages and safe workplaces are a standard—not a privilege. The unfortunate reality is that I have given this similar testimony too many times to be at a point where BOLI has been forced to triage wage and hour and civil rights claims, telling workers we can't help you right now. I've seen agencies be unwilling to do what we think they should to protect workers, but this is entirely different. BOLI is unable to carry out its mission currently - not because we're arguing over what the law does or doesn't say - but because they are receiving far more claims than their Divisions can process, they're working with a database system that is antiquated and the organization isn't structured to meet the needs of Oregon workers. We have a

once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to right that course and ensure that the laws this legislature has already passed and argued over are a reality for Oregonians. That's what we're asking you to do today.

In particular, we support the following key aspects of BOLI's budget request:

1. **Increased Enforcement of Wage and Hour Laws:** Wage theft remains a significant issue, particularly for low-wage workers. BOLI plays a central role in ensuring these laws are enforced. Increased funding will allow BOLI to address the growing number of wage theft complaints, strengthen outreach efforts, and pursue investigations into unscrupulous employers who exploit workers.
2. **Support for Civil Rights Protections:** BOLI is essential in enforcing anti-discrimination laws in housing, employment, and public accommodations. With this budget request, BOLI can continue to investigate and address complaints of discrimination, ensuring that all Oregonians, regardless of their race, gender, or background, have access to fair and equal opportunities.

For these reasons, we strongly support the Bureau of Labor and Industry's budget request, including the utilization of the Worker Benefit Fund this session and into the future. Investing in BOLI is investing in Oregon's workforce, and it is an essential step toward ensuring a fair and just labor market for all Oregonians. We urge you to prioritize the resources necessary to strengthen this agency and its ability to protect and serve working people.

Thank you for your time and consideration.