

To: Co-Chairs Woods and Gomberg

Members of the Subcommittee on Transportation and Economic Development

RE: Support for a fully funded BOLI, HB 5015

Date: February 27th, 2025

Co-chairs Woods, Gomberg and members of the Committee,

For the record my name is Iris Hodge, Director of Government Relations and Communications for Oregon School Employees Association (OSEA). I am writing today on behalf of the 25,000 classified workers that OSEA represents across every county in the state. We are the bus drivers, secretaries, nutrition assistants, mechanics, SPED support staff and so much more. Our union stands in strong support of fully funding the Bureau of Labor and Industries and HB 5015.

Our members are the glue that holds Oregon schools together, and they work hard to support their families, contribute to the economy, and build better communities. However, without a strong, fully funded agency to enforce labor protections, workers' rights—and everything they contribute—is at risk.

At OSEA, we've seen firsthand how disinvestment in BOLI has created an enforcement crisis. BOLI has fewer staff now than it did in the 1980s, despite significant growth in Oregon's workforce. This staffing shortage has led to unacceptable delays in investigating claims and allows wage theft, and discriminatory practices to continue unchecked.

At the same time, uncertainty at the federal level—underscores the urgency for Oregon to prioritize strong state enforcement of worker protections.

When BOLI is stretched too thin, the message is clear: worker's rights are not a priority, and bad actors can exploit their workers without consequence. We cannot allow this to continue. Oregon's workers deserve an enforcement agency that is strong enough to ensure that the laws passed by the Legislature meant to protect them actually do.

Oregon has some of the strongest worker protection laws in the country, but without BOLI's enforcement, these laws are nothing more than words on paper. BOLI needs full funding to give these protections real power, and ensure no worker is left waiting months for their rights to be enforced.

Classified education staff deserve better. Oregon deserves better. OSEA 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.

Sincerely,

Iris Hodge

OSEA

Director, Government Relations and Communications