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

I'm writing today to strongly urge you to fully fund the Bureau of Labor and Industries (BOLI). The Oregon & SW Washington Roofers Apprenticeship has allowed me to not only earn as I learn, but to get into a lifelong family wage career with full family healthcare and retirement benefits that will allow me to retire with dignity. To me and other registered apprentices and Journeyworkers, BOLI is vital to my career as they regulate registered apprenticeships in the state and enforce the prevailing wage laws that ensure I get paid fairly for my work and am not taken advantage of.

At Oregon & SW Washington Roofers Apprenticeship, 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's staff is stretched too thin, one thing is clear: workers' rights are not a priority, and bad actors across the state can exploit their workers without consequence. This cannot continue. Working Oregonians 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.

Workers deserve better enforcement of laws that already exist on the books. Oregon & SW Washington Roofers Apprenticeship and our more than 250 Apprentices strongly urge you to fully fund BOLI and give the agency the resources it needs to uphold the rights of workers across the state by enforcing the laws that exist.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Jason Barthel

