



SERVICE EMPLOYEES
INTERNATIONAL UNION

525 NE Oregon Street
Portland, OR 97232
503.236.4949
Toll Free 800.955.3352
Fax 503.238.8653
Toll Free Fax 888.595.7979
www.seiu49.org



Subcommittee on Transportation and Economic Development Testimony in favor of HB 5015, to fully fund BOLI

Yasmin Ibarra, Political Director, SEIU Local 49

February 25, 2025

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

My name is Yasmin Ibarra, writing on behalf of the 14,000 SEIU Local 49 members in Oregon and southwest Washington.

Our members are at the front lines of caring for people in hospitals and clinics, cleaning and securing offices and other properties, ensuring Portland International Airport passengers and their luggage get where they need to go, and providing other services that benefit us all.

Unfortunately, some employers are so focused on the bottom line, they fail to comply with laws protecting workers' rights and well-being, and service workers suffer the consequences, including wage theft and discrimination.

While union members have a contract, shop stewards, and staff they can call on to fairly resolve disputes with their employers, workers without a union are more vulnerable to mistreatment. For the laws on the books protecting workers' wages and freedom from discrimination to mean anything, workers need the Bureau of Labor and Industries to be there to enforce them.

For these reasons, SEIU Local 49 strongly supports fully funding BOLI so that it can fulfill its vital mission.

BOLI has many committed, effective employees who work every day to ensure fair treatment, and we recognize recent and ongoing improvements in the agency's efficiency, user experience, data collection, and other best practices. To give one example, BOLI's Proactive Investigation and Enforcement (PIE) unit is adopting cutting-edge approaches to identify and hold accountable the bad actors who drive down industry standards for all workers.

Even so, we have witnessed a growing crisis in the enforcement of wage and hour and civil rights laws. For decades, the Legislature has not sufficiently invested in the agency as needed to keep up with the rapid growth of the workforce. BOLI staff have been assigned the impossible task of responding to and investigating many more violations of law, with fewer resources. This has emboldened some employers who choose to violate workers' rights while chasing profits, believing they can get away with it.

We cannot allow this to continue. Oregon's workers need and deserve an agency that has sufficient resources to effectively enforce the state laws meant to protect them.

We in SEIU Local 49 urge you in the strongest terms to fully fund BOLI, to protect the rights and well-being of workers, their families, and their communities in every industry and every corner of our state.