



Testimony in support of HB 5015 (2025)

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

My name is Kate Suisman. I am an attorney at the Northwest Workers' Justice Project (NWJP). Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this important bill. We provide education, advice, and legal services to workers in low-wage jobs. We also engage in policy advocacy and try to bring the important perspectives of workers in low-wage jobs and immigrant workers to these policy discussions.

We stand in strong support of fully funding the Bureau of Labor and Industries.

At NWJP, we've seen firsthand how disinvestment in BOLI has created an enforcement crisis. This has led to unacceptable delays in investigating claims and allows wage theft, and discriminatory practices to continue unchecked. We hear from workers who are behind on their rent and struggling to feed their families, only to have to explain that BOLI may take years to fully investigate their wage claims. We hear from workers being actively harassed at work to the point of mental health crises, only to have to explain that BOLI may take months to respond to a civil rights questionnaire.

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.

Workers deserve better. Oregon deserves better. NWJP strongly urges you to fully fund BOLI and give the agency the resources it needs to uphold the rights of workers across the state.

I urge your yes vote.

Thank you.