



Dear Chair Grayber, Vice Chair Munoz, Vice Chair Scharf and members of the House Committee on Labor and Workforce Development,

I work for Basic Rights Oregon and my name is Seth Johnstone and we are in support of HB 4027 -1. Oregonians can't be forced to wait years for their rights on the job to be enforced. A well-funded BOLI also means an equal playing field for employers who are just trying to do follow the law and it means the appropriate number of staff needed to clear the backlog that has plagued workers due to understaffing in the bureau. In the previous 2025 session, our legislature heard how that the Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries (BOLI) was facing an unprecedented crisis that threatens worker protections and civil rights enforcement in the state.

This considerably impacts the community members Basic Rights Oregon supports. Until 2025, we received weekly calls from individuals who had been discriminated against in employment, let go from their jobs, and unsure where to turn because they hadn't heard for months after filing a complaint with BOLI. This issue is very important to our organization because we see the direct impact of gender identity and sexual orientation discrimination in employment. When we don't have an enforcement mechanism for our policies, we see negatively impacted financial stability of our community, housing and food issues and many more risk factors occur. When there is delayed or no accountability or enforcement of our rights and state laws due to understaffing, the folks we support have not seen timely justice.

Systemic underfunding over the past four decades has left the agency unable to cope with the escalating demand for its services. As the agency tasked with enforcing key employment laws and protecting Oregonians from discrimination, harassment, and wage theft, BOLI's current capacity was woefully inadequate to meet the needs of the Oregonians it serves. This investment ends after the 2027-29 biennium and without a sustainable funding model implemented, we risk backsliding on the progress made in 2025.

Without a funding guarantee, BOLI staff tasked with critical functions like reducing the backlog will start to look for alternate employment – inhibiting the Bureau's ability to maintain their trajectory of getting eliminating the wage and hour backlog by mid 2029.

Basic Rights Oregon urges your support of this bill.