

Oregon Center for Christian Voices
PO Box 11567, Portland OR 97211

April 4, 2013

Senator Shields, Chair
Senator George, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on General Government, Consumer and Small Business Protection
Oregon Legislative Assembly

Re: Support for SB 573

Dear Chair Shields, Vice Chair George, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Karen Nettler, and I am a resident of Portland. I am writing to you as Board Chair on behalf of Oregon Center for Christian Voices (OCCV) to ask for your support of SB 573 to provide workers with stronger tools for recovering stolen pay, and to also thereby deter employers from not stealing wages in the first place.

OCCV is a faith-based non-profit seeking to activate Christians on issues of economic and social justice. We believe Scripture is clear that God's intended role for government is assure that poor and marginalized people are cared for, and that all have opportunity to flourish. For this reason, OCCV has joined with over 30 other groups in the Oregon Coalition to Stop Wage Theft, to advocate for laws that address this critical issue.

Scripture says, "You shall not withhold the wages of poor and needy laborers...You shall pay them their wages daily before sunset, because they are poor and their livelihood depends on them. (Deuteronomy 24:14-15) We believe the bill before this committee is consistent with that scriptural mandate, as it provides assurance that if workers are not paid for their labor, they will have meaningful legal redress to recover the stolen wages. The current system for recovering stolen wages is flawed, so that even with a judgment against an employer, the low wage worker often does not recover the stolen wages because the process has taken too long, or the employer's assets have become unavailable.

SB 573 will address the flaw in the current system by helping workers who have not been paid to assert claims against an employers' assets early in the process, before the income generated by their labor disappears. Enforcement of current wage and hour laws is not enough when workers who have won wage claims are unable to collect the pay that has been stolen from them.

OCCV urges you to support SB 573 in Committee and on the Senate floor. Workers need stronger legal tools to collect unpaid wages from abusive employers. We see this law as consistent with the responsibility we have as citizens and government to "...not turn aside the needy from justice, or rob the poor of their right..." (Isaiah 10:1-2)

Respectfully,

Karen Nettler, Board Chair
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