

TO: House Business and Labor Committee

FROM: Karen Nettler, board chair, Oregon Center for Christian Voices

RE: **Construction Labor Bill** (HB 2977) (SB 612 A-Engrossed passed Senate in 2011)
Temporary Laborer Bill including Notice and Payroll Stub Provisions (HB2976)
Definitions Bill (HB3142)

Chair Doherty and members of the committee:

My name is Karen Nettler, I am a resident of Portland, and I am speaking to you on behalf of Oregon Center for Christian Voices (OCCV). We are a faith-based non-profit seeking to activate Christians on issues of economic and social justice. We believe we have a clear mandate from Scripture to advocate for poor and marginalized people in our community, those who, while not powerless are often not at the table when decisions about public policy are made; so we seek to speak out on their behalf.

We believe scripture is clear about God's intended role for government and that is, to assure the poor and marginalized in our community are cared for, and that all have opportunity to flourish. Those who have the authority to pass laws, and all of us who see injustice, bear responsibility to assure laws are put in place to prevent those without equal access to power from being exploited by the more powerful.

For this reason, OCCV is joining with other groups to advocate for laws that address the issue of wage theft. OCCV joined over 100 other leaders and members of Oregon faith communities in signing an interfaith letter urging Oregon lawmakers to address wage theft this session. I have submitted a copy of the letter with my written testimony.

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; otherwise they might cry to the Lord against you, and you would incur guilt." (Deuteronomy 24:14-15) We believe the three bills before this committee are consistent with that scriptural mandate, as they address fair and fundamental rights for employees, including the right to know the conditions of the work they have been hired to perform, assurance that they will be paid for the work performed, and a means for legal redress when those rights are violated. Further, we see these laws as entirely 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)

Finally, OCCV believes that when we care for the poor and marginalized, we are acting on behalf of all of us, helping to create a community where all can flourish, as God intends. God was speaking to a nation, as well as to individuals when he said, "...and what is it that the Lord asks of you? Only to act justly, to love mercy, and to walk wisely before your God." (Micah 6:8) So, as people of faith we ask that you support these bills to establish basic rights for employees in need of the protection of these common-sense laws.