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TO: Chair Holvey
Members of the House Committee on Business and Labor

FR: The Oregon AFL-CIO

RE: **Support for Five Economic Fairness Bills**

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The Oregon AFL-CIO represents more than 300,000 working Oregonians, is a voice for all workers in the legislative process and engages in efforts to make Oregon's economy fairer. By some standards, namely job creation and state GDP, it appears the state's economy is doing quite well and the recovery from the Great Recession is behind us. Unfortunately, this "recovery" has bypassed many working Oregonians and continues to leave more and more behind, namely low-wage workers, women and people of color.

As the Oregon Legislature considers its role in helping to create an economy that works for all, there will be many opportunities to debate legislation around basic fairness in the workplace. This Committee has an opportunity, today, to hear about five bills addressing a variety of fairness matters facing working Oregonians.

- **HB 2386: Tools to Combat Wage Theft (BOLI Cease and Desist)**
 - For those employers that are consistently committing violations of wage and hour laws in Oregon, BOLI does not currently have the ability to issue a cease and desist order to a bad actor even when there is significant evidence that violations have been committed. This means that violations can continue until further in the investigation.
 - By giving BOLI cease and desist authority for wage and hour claims, like what is currently granted for civil rights violations, the agency has another important tool to stop bad actors in our economy and stand up for vulnerable workers.
- **HB 2387: Tools to Combat Wage Theft (BOLI Bonding)**
 - Some employers fail to pay their workers (either on-time OR at all) on a regular basis and, due to a number of factors, it can be very difficult for workers to collect the wages they are owed.
 - By giving BOLI the authority to require employers who are frequently guilty of not paying their employees to post a bond for wages, workers have one more tool to claim their unpaid wages.
- **HB 2212: Tools to Combat Wage Theft (Civil Penalty for Failure to Pay Wages on Time)**
 - Despite state law requiring employers to "establish and maintain a regular payday", there are few safeguards for workers against consistent or flagrant abuses of this expectation of employers.
 - By adding a civil penalty to this portion of the statute, workers have another way to exercise their rights and claim their unpaid or delayed wages.

- **HB 2007: Wage Transparency**
 - Workers in Oregon can currently face retaliation for discussing their wages and salaries with their coworkers or for raising their voice about their right to a fair wage.
 - By prohibiting this type of retaliation in the workplace, working Oregonians can have the confidence to speak up about pay disparities.
- **HB 2006: Equal Pay**
 - Despite current statutory protections, women in Oregon still earn roughly 79 cents for every dollar a man makes, only slightly better than the national average (77 cents for every dollar).
 - By strengthening Oregon's Equal Pay Act with this bill, the Oregon Legislature has an opportunity to lead on this persistent inequity in the workplace and instill needed balance from gender-based disparities in the economy.

The Oregon AFL-CIO supports these five proposals for their efforts to give workers in Oregon a set of needed protections and look forward to working with the Chair and this Committee to continue these types of solution-oriented discussions about proposals to keep working Oregonians from being left behind by our growing and improving economy.