



March 9, 2015

Testimony to Senate Committee on Workforce

Provided by: Paloma Sparks, Legislative Director, Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries

The Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries (BOLI) appreciates the opportunity to testify in support of SB 19, which makes individuals who aided and abetted in violating workers' wage and hour rights jointly and severally liable with the business.

The Bureau of Labor and Industries enforces anti-discrimination laws that apply to workplaces, housing and public accommodations; enforces wage and hour laws; educates employers to avoid potential violations; and partners with labor, business and other organizations to develop a highly-skilled, competitive workforce in Oregon.

The vast majority of employers play by the rules and take care of their workers when making business decisions. Some, however, try to gain unfair advantages by cutting corners and treating workers unfairly. These unscrupulous business practices not only hurt individual workers, but also create an unfair playing field for other law-abiding businesses.

When workers have not been paid what they earn, they file wage claims with the Bureau to help collect what is due. Failing to pay wages hurts workers in many ways – lost wages can have a cumulative negative impact on a working family's overall financial well-being. Ultimately, there is a negative impact on our economy when workers don't get paid what they have earned.

Senate Bill 19 changes current law so that individuals who are responsible for intentionally denying employee wages they've earned can also be held responsible.

This is crucial to address the issue of employers who, rather than paying workers, close businesses and restart under a new name. SB 19 will also help the Bureau to make sure that individuals who cheat workers cannot escape responsibility under the law.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of SB 19. I urge you to pass this bill and ensure workers get paid what they have earned and are entitled to. I'm happy to answer any questions.

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