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TO: Chair Dembrow, Vice-Chair Thatcher
Members of the Senate Committee on Workforce

FR: The Oregon AFL-CIO

RE: **Support for SB 718**

March 9, 2015

The Oregon AFL-CIO represents over 300,000 working Oregonians and is a voice for all workers in the legislative process. Our members work in many sectors of Oregon's economy, some of which are quite prone to wage theft. But our interest in this issue is, more importantly, on behalf of workers that will likely never be represented by a union or covered by a collective bargaining agreement. Despite Oregon's economic recovery and, by some standards an economy on firm footing, many in today's workforce are still getting left behind. With over 400,000 Oregon workers doing low wage work, many of whom also rely on public assistance to provide for their families, it's clear that today's economy looks much different than it did before the Great Recession.

The 2015 Oregon Legislature is considering a host of proposals to address economic inequality through a variety of different approaches. If we're not talking about wage theft as an undercutting force in our entire economy at the same time these other types of policies are being discussed, we're leaving behind, even further, an entire segment of workers in Oregon who don't even have access to minimum standards currently in the law, and many of whom are often voiceless and without advocacy tools to improve their situation

There are a number of important approaches to fighting wage theft, including at the agency level. However, an agency approach alone is not enough and SB 718 provides vital tools to workers that can better help them expose employer wrongdoing and reduce barriers so that they can get help and recover the wages they are owed.

The Oregon AFL-CIO strongly urges your support for SB 718 to make a statement that the State of Oregon will fight to end wage theft.