

Testimony for SB 718/HB 3083 submitted by Andrea Miller, Executive Director of Causa
March 9, 2015

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. For the record, my name is Andrea Miller. I'm here representing Causa, an organization that has worked for the last 20 years to advocate for issues impacting Latino immigrant families in Oregon. Causa's mission is to foster a society that recognizes the contributions of immigrants and upholds the values of democracy, equality, and respect.

I'm here to support SB 718/ HB 3083, or the Fair Wage Recovery Act, which would help address the growing problem of Wage Theft.

While wage theft impacts a diverse set of workers, it is particularly pervasive among women, immigrants, and workers of color. This means combatting wage theft is an equity issue in addition to a justice issue. Latino workers are especially susceptible to wage theft. For example, foreign-born Latino workers had the highest minimum wage violation rates of any racial/ethnic group in a 2009 study of pay violations experienced by low-wage workers.¹ This is unacceptable and I commend the legislature for taking up this important issue.

Not being paid the legal wage for the hours you worked simply isn't right, and clearly isn't lawful, but many workers face challenges to enforcing their rights. At Causa, we hear from too many workers who have experienced wage theft. Many are struggling, but are afraid to speak up because of fear of retaliation, knowing that losing their jobs would strain their families' budgets further. And those that do speak up face significant barriers in trying to enforce their rights.

SB 718 would provide workers with a simple, powerful set of tools to help these workers hold their employers accountable and collect their wages. In doing so, it would help ensure that legal protections like minimum wage, overtime and decent working conditions become a reality for all workers.

I urge your support of SB 718/ HB 3083. Thank you.

¹ Annette Berhardt et al., *Broken Laws, Unprotected Workers: Violations of Employment and Labor Laws in America's Cities* (New York, 2009), available at www.nelp.org/page/-/brokenlaws/BrokenLawsReport2009.pdf