
To: House Committee on Business and Labor

From: The Main Street Alliance of Oregon

Date: April 1, 2015

Re: Letter in Support of HB 3471

Chair Holvey, Vice-Chairs Kennemer and Barton, and Members of the Committee,

The Main Street Alliance of Oregon, a coalition of over 2500 small businesses across Oregon, supports HB 3471, the Employment-Related Public Benefit Fee. Large and out-of-state corporations are extracting wealth from our state and local communities by taking advantage of state-funded systems without paying their fair share. Through paying low-wages and only providing part-time work, many large corporations are seeing record profits. In addition, through cutting hours, benefits, and wages, they are able to sell goods at artificially low prices.

Main Street business owners are proud to invest in our employees and communities and to pay their fair share to help support our local economies. We strive to pay living wages, and provide basic workplace standards like paid time off, health care and retirement security savings plans. To us, our employees are like a team, we count on each other and know that we're all in this together.

The extractive businesses in our communities don't see their workers' ability to put food on the table a driving factor in their business practices. Instead, they see their employees as a line item on their budget; they often have staff who are paid to find creative ways to cut costs—through tax loopholes, taking advantage of state programs, and so on. At the same time, hundreds of thousand of working Oregonians are living less than pay-check to pay-check, and forced to rely on publically funded programs to make ends meet.

Corporations taking advantage of this system are reaping substantial benefits from state-funded social programs. These programs help more low-wage workers enter and remain in the workforce, making it easier for business owners to recruit and retain a qualified, productive workforce, and increases our customer base. After all, what small business owners need most is more customers, and when those in our communities who are earning the least can still afford to keep supporting Main Street businesses, like ours, Oregon's local economy thrives.

Our state already has a regressive corporate tax structure, with larger, more well-funded corporations contributing a lot less to Oregon. This leaves small businesses and working families to pick up the bill. It's time that Oregon take steps to start holding large corporations accountable—HB 3471, the Public Benefit Fee is a good step in that direction.

Yours respectfully,



Stephen Michael
State Director