



**To: Senate Workforce and General Government Committee**  
**Date: February 4, 2016**  
**RE: Support for SB 1537**

The Oregon Education Association asks for your support for SB 1587 to address the important problem of wage theft in Oregon. This bill will help our state move forward to strengthen wage laws, protect workers, and ensure workers are paid what they owe by building a foundation for comprehensive wage theft reform in 2017. We also strongly support this bill's inclusion of a limited private right of action that will help create the necessary tools to combat wage theft.

Wage theft is an epidemic that costs workers nationwide billions of dollars a year, and makes life harder for already struggling families and the children that OEA members serve in our schools.

Wage theft happens to workers in all industries. From retail, restaurants, and grocery stores, to domestic work, construction and personal services—Oregon workers are cheated out of millions of dollars every year. Many don't report violations out of fear of retaliation.

From 2010 to 2013, Oregon employers only paid 28 percent of the stolen wages they were ordered to give back to workers. Today, many companies violate wage theft laws because they don't believe they'll be held accountable.

By holding dishonest employers accountable, we can crack down on illegal employment practices and curb the race to the bottom that results in the loss of good jobs in the market overall. This levels the playing field and alleviates pressure on honest employers to find other ways to cut costs and strengthens our economy. Stopping wage theft gives workers the pay they deserve.

SB 1587 gives workers more tools to expose employer wrongdoing by ensuring we have access to wage and hour records including pay stubs. Employers who deny access to such records will be held accountable. The bill makes it easier for workers to find legal help and reduces barriers to help recover the wages workers are owed. It strengthens enforcement and accountability and provides state agencies with additional tools and resources to enforce existing wage and hour laws and hold excessive and intentional offenders accountable.

The Oregon Education Association joins a broad coalition urging passage of SB 1587 to ensure all workers are paid what they're owed.

*Working wonders for public education*