



February 4, 2016

Members of the Senate Workforce and General Government Committee,

I am writing on behalf of PFLAG Portland Black Chapter. We focus on supporting Black lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer persons, their families, and friends through love and understanding, education, and advocacy. Our social justice work takes place at the intersections of race and LGBTQ identities.

PFLAG Portland Black Chapter is a proud member of the Fair Shot Coalition working to bring economic justice and fairness to all Oregonians. We know that Black LGBTQ Oregonians too often face startling disparities as was lifted up in our 2012 Lift Every Voice Report that brought visibility to the experiences of Black LGBTQ Oregonians.

We are writing to thank you for your consideration of SB 1587 to stop wage theft in Oregon. SB 1587 paves the way for Oregon to be a national leader in enforcing wage laws, protecting workers, and collecting unpaid wages, and builds a foundation for comprehensive wage theft reform in 2017.

Wage theft is an epidemic that costs workers nationwide billions of dollars a year. While most employers in our communities do right by their workers, too many do not. It's time to end workplace abuses and illegal employment practices that leave too many workers and their families shortchanged.

Wage theft makes it tough for women, people of color, LGBTQ communities, immigrants and working families to get ahead. For a worker earning minimum wage, getting cheated out of 30 minutes of pay each day adds up to more than \$1,400 a year. For families struggling to get by, that can be the difference between paying rent on time and facing eviction.

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. Women, people of color, immigrants, and low-wage workers are more vulnerable to wage theft.

Laws protecting workers from wage theft aren't being enforced. Even when workers go through the difficult process of winning a wage theft claim, many never see a dime. 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.

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. We are glad to see a limited private right of action included in this bill and believe that it is an essential part of the solution to wage theft.