



February 4, 2016

Members of the Senate Workforce and General Government Committee,

We are writing to thank you for your consideration of SB 1587 to stop wage theft in Oregon. It's time to end workplace abuses and illegal employment practices that leave too many workers and their families shortchanged. This bill gives state agencies more resources to enforce wage laws and holds excessive and intentional offenders accountable and builds for comprehensive wage theft reform in 2017. Equally important it provides for limited private right of action included in this bill and believe that it is an essential part of the solution to wage theft.

Basic Rights Oregon works fearlessly and tirelessly to build a strong, vibrant, powerful and progressive movement for LGBTQ equality. We understand that LGBTQ Oregonians exist in every community, and in every corner of the state. We have to engage in strategic and values-based coalitions to address the many needs of our communities. As such, building alliances with progressive groups that advocate for working families, racial justice, immigrant rights, reproductive justice, and campaign reform are important to us to meet the varied needs of our diverse community.

Poverty disproportionately affects women, LGBTQ people, and people of color, and wage theft is a barrier for families to get out of poverty and get ahead. It is an epidemic that costs workers nationwide billions of dollars a year. For a worker earning minimum wage, getting cheated out of only 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. We get calls at Basic Rights Oregon regularly from Oregonians with employment concerns so it is important to us that we weigh in on this particular issue. It is hard for our community to speak out sometimes.

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, LGBTQ and immigrant communities, 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. It's time to change that.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,  
Nancy Haque