

TO: Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee
FR: Arthur Towers, Oregon Trial Lawyers Association
RE: **OTLA Support for HB 4067-A**
February 22, 2016

I am writing to express OTLA's support for HB 4067-A. A number of our members fight for whistle blowers in the public and private sector. The courageous workers our members represent are seeking to right injustices, report waste and fraud, and put an end to unethical or illegal activity on the job.

Many times they are seeking to protect taxpayers' dollars or stop or prevent abuse.

We also fight for victims of abuse and neglect, and have sought justice for many of the young people victimized while in state-funded care.

Events in the last 18 months have eroded even future the public's trust in government on the state and national level.

HB 4067-A is an important step in the right direction to help workers find the courage to risk their jobs and reputations, their security, and their future. The bill is not a panacea. But this is a good bill that is needed now.

One of the strengths of the bill is that it covers the non-profit, tax-exempt setting. The elderly, children, and Oregonians with disabilities are often cared for by workers employed by these entities. As recent events have reminded us, these workers need to have every protection possible to report abuse.

A second strength of the bill is that it recognizes that whistleblowers often report the abuse or misconduct internally as well as externally. The bill recognizes that reality and protects whistleblowers regardless of which route they pursue. This is as it should be.

Organizations in which complicit silence is the cultural norm have got to be reformed. HB 4067-A is the bill to speed up that process.

The bill earned unanimous and bi-partisan support in the House. The short session is a good venue to explore solutions to significant problems that come to a peak between sessions. Representative Buehler and Senator Gelser deserve a lot of credit for bringing this forward, and we are thrilled that the stars aligned to put this bill in a position to pass.