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TO: Chair Holvey
Vice-Chair Bynum
Vice- Chair Barreto
Members of the House Committee on Business and Labor

FR: Jessica Giannettino, Oregon AFL-CIO

RE: Support for HB 2856, Labor Law Enforcement and Worker Outreach

February 27, 2017

The Oregon AFL-CIO represents 300,000 working Oregonians and is a voice for all workers in the legislative process. Too frequently, workers, especially low wage workers, are unaware of federal and state protections that they are entitled to. This creates an environment in some workplaces where some employers can exploit this vulnerability and can violate everything from wage and hour protections to discrimination. Too often, in organizing drives we find such circumstances.

At the Oregon AFL-CIO, we fairly regularly get calls from unrepresented workers who contact us solely because they don't know where else to go. We then pass them along to BOLI or the appropriate agency. We also frequently get calls from our community based partners who have no capacity to even refer workers to the appropriate state agency, but have deep ties to the communities that are most impacted and are often the first call these workers make. The fact that both the Oregon AFL-CIO and our community based partners are getting this initial contact from workers who are experiencing workplace issues is evidence that more outreach to effected communities is needed.

BOLI currently has a robust and targeted outreach strategy for employers, but no equivalent for worker outreach and education. HB 2856 allows the legislature a chance to balance the approach that state agencies take and provide adequate guidance for both employers and workers.

The Oregon AFL-CIO strongly encourages your support of HB 2856.