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**Testimony of D. Michael Dale  
Before the House Judiciary Committee  
March 27, 2017  
HB 3279 – Licensing of Building Services Contractors**

I am the Executive Director of the Northwest Workers' Justice Project. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.

I have been a lawyer since 1975, and have spent most of that time representing migrant and seasonal workers. The Northwest Workers' Justice Project provides legal representation to low wage contingent workers throughout the economy in sectors such as construction, building maintenance, landscaping, hotel and restaurant industry, food processing, agriculture and reforestation. This bill is supported by the Coalition to Stop Wage Theft, of which NWJJP is a member. The Coalition includes about 40 civic, labor, religious and business organizations.<sup>1</sup>

From 1977 until 2002, I worked for migrant legal services programs in Oregon, supervising the statewide program for most of that time. In that connection I was intimately involved in developing and enforcing the Oregon Contractor Registration Act, ORS 405 et seq. Major strengthening revisions were enacted in 1979, 1981, 1983, and 1989. These changes incorporated reforestation contractors under the Act's coverage. In 2013, NWJJP led the effort to include construction labor brokers under this regulatory regime.

We have found that this licensing scheme has made significant improvements in the work climate in agriculture and reforestation. While worker abuses certainly continue in these industries, requiring contractors to have a license, and those who use contractors to only deal with responsible, licensed contractors, has made a significant improvement in enforcement of employment laws in what had been egregiously exploitive industries. But this takes time. The inclusion of construction labor brokers only took effect in July of 2015, and non-compliance is

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<sup>1</sup> Adelante Mujeres, AFL/CIO of Oregon, AFT Oregon, American Friends Service Committee, Beyond Toxics, CAUSA, Catholic Office of Life, Justice and Peace, Archdiocese of Portland, Centro Latino Americano of Eugene, Common Cause Oregon, Community Alliance of Lane County, Economic Fairness Oregon, Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon, Family Forward Oregon, Human Dignity Advocates of Crook County, Interfaith Movement for Immigrant Justice (IMiJ), Jewish Federation of Greater Portland, Mainstreet Alliance, Northwest Forest Worker Center, Northwest Workers' Justice Project, Oregon Action, Oregon AFSCME, Oregon School Employees Association, Oregon Center for Christian Voices, Oregon Center for Public Policy, Oregon Strong Voice - Southern OR Chapter, Oregon Thrives, Oregon Trial Lawyers Association (OTLA), Oregon Working Families, PCUN, Portland Jobs with Justice, Project REconomy, Rural Organizing Project, SEIU Local 49, SEIU Local 503, Tax Fairness Oregon, Teamsters Local 26, Unidos Bridging Community, United Food and Commercial Workers Local 555, and VOZ Workers Education Project.

still quite wide spread. It will, no doubt, take years to bring the industry into significant compliance, as it did with agriculture and reforestation.

Notwithstanding, watching the development of this law over the last 40 years leaves me no doubt that this bill will be worth the effort, and will ultimately help reward responsible actors and punish and eliminate those who would exploit.

Finally, the inclusion of a focus on sexual harassment and assault is key to protecting vulnerable workers, particularly in the janitorial industry, where so many work in isolation through the night.

We strongly recommend passage of this bill.