



Info@occv.org

Chair Holvey, Vice Chair Barreto, Vice Chair Bynum and members of the Committee,

My name is John Calhoun and I am a resident of Portland. I am here today on behalf of the Oregon Center for Christian Voices (OCCV) and speaking in favor of HB 2169, HB 2180, and HB2181

“Listen! The wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out, and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts.”

James 5:4

As members of Oregon faith communities, we are deeply concerned about the injustices suffered by our neighbors who are victims of wage theft. Wage theft is pernicious and not defensible, yet time after time the Oregon legislation has not taken action to discourage this immoral act. Too many of our most vulnerable citizens have what is legally owed to them taken and our justice system essentially shrugs.

We urge you to support legislation in the 2016 session that will strengthen laws to prevent wage theft and provide additional remedies for its victims. Wage theft already violates the law; yet it continues to be practiced by unscrupulous employers, who often are not held accountable for their actions.

“Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to do it.”

Proverbs 3:27

The Bible tells us that all who see injustice, and particularly those who have the authority to pass laws, bear responsibility to assure laws are put in place to prevent those without equal access to power from being exploited by the more powerful. While wage theft is common across many industries, it disproportionately affects low-wage workers, those who are already struggling to provide for their family’s basic needs, and those most vulnerable to exploitation by

unscrupulous employers. We have a responsibility as citizens and law-makers to assure that laws are sufficient to protect the poor and vulnerable, because when we care for them, we are acting on behalf of all of us in creating a community where all can flourish.

“You must pay out the wages due on the same day, before the sun sets, for the worker is needy and urgently depends on it.”

Deuteronomy 24:15

We acknowledge that the vast majority of employers treat their workers fairly, paying them on time for their work. They too, are disadvantaged by wage theft when they must compete with others who violate the laws and are not held accountable. We urge you to take action on wage theft legislation on behalf of workers, honest employers, and all of us, believing that the wellbeing of all in our communities is dependent upon establishing laws that provide protection for the most vulnerable among us. God was speaking to a nation as well as individuals when he said:

“...and what is it that the Lord asks of you? Only to act justly, to love mercy...”

Micah 6:8