



**Joint Committee on Ways & Means  
Subcommittee on Transportation and Economic Development  
April 1, 2019  
Support for SB 5516**

Our coalition of natural resources stakeholders respectfully asks for your support of SB 5516, particularly budget requests that would expand the Bureau of Labor and Industries (“BOLI”) role of providing technical assistance and education to Oregon employers.

The agency’s focus on technical assistance is long overdue. The passage of recent workplace laws (e.g. paid sick leave, minimum wage, overtime, equal pay) has made Oregon’s regulatory landscape confusing and difficult to navigate for small and seasonal employers. Oregon’s farmers, ranchers, and loggers are often unable to hire professional human resources services, and as such, are often the ones interpreting Oregon statutes and regulations to ensure compliance. This is a difficult task for professionals, let alone family businesses.

BOLI houses the expertise related to the implementation and intersection of Oregon’s wage and hour and civil rights laws. However, training and education for employers have historically come at a cost, and some stakeholders don’t have access to these tools to help implement the laws passed by the Legislature. This was clear after the passage of paid sick time in 2015. BOLI received over 20,000 calls seeking technical assistance. Natural resources stakeholders, some represented on this letter, paid for technical assistance workshops in 2016, but couldn’t reach the broader agricultural community through local workshops. We agree that technical assistance for employers ought to be a core focus going forward.

We also support the addition of an eastern Oregon technical assistance and apprenticeship position within the agency. Eastern Oregon businesses need dedicated attention, and apprenticeship deserves more of a focus in rural areas of the state. This position would allow someone based in eastern Oregon to address the very different and specific labor demands of Oregon’s rural communities.

Additionally, we appreciate the transition to a stable, general fund source to pay for technical assistance as opposed to a program funded by fee revenue. Regulatory guidebooks shouldn’t be a revenue source for a program that benefits employers and employees across Oregon.

As a final point, we support the request to update BOLI’s website. Currently the website is confusing to navigate and/ or find relevant information to inform wage and hour or civil rights questions. We support modernizing the website to create a one-stop-shop that meets the needs of natural resources employers, whether it be through the home or shop computer or a smart phone.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments in support of SB 5516. We urge passage of this budget with its renewed focus on technical assistance and education.