

# OREGON TRIAL LAWYERS ASSOCIATION

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Testimony of Arthur Towers  
In Support of HB 4087  
Before the House Committee on Business and Labor  
February 3, 2020

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in favor of HB 4087. I have the privilege to be the Political Director for the Oregon Trial Lawyers Association. Our members are lawyers who fight for underdogs, including workers who are subjected to wage theft, discrimination, harassment, and other unfair labor practices.

We strongly support HB 4087. Our members feel strongly that improving funding for the technical assistance program for employers would be good for workers. The vast majority of employers want to treat their workers fairly and legally. This program prevents poor treatment of workers. That is what we want to accomplish. The idea that bad actors are bankrolling the training of businesses that are trying to figure out how to treat workers fairly appeals to our sense of justice.

We also believe that allocating funds to the Wage Security Fund is also a good use of the money. WSF is used by workers in the most dire straits. Their employer has gone out of business but owes them money. Creating an additional funding source for the Wage Security Fund is important.

That said, we don't take lightly the idea of diverting money from schools. While school funding is not a focal point for OTLA members, we know that once a fund is raided the temptation is to raid it repeatedly. In this instance, we are comfortable taking this position because the relationship between the new

targets of funding are very related to the source of the money, and because the amount of money in question is an infinitesimal fraction of the Common School Fund, but represents a more meaningful amount for the WSF and TA programs.

The amount of money under discussion is budget dust for the state. BOLI, as a whole, is woefully underfunded and deserves more General Fund. While TA and WSF are not exactly enforcement programs, we strongly believe that enforcement-related agencies are the first to be hit during economic downturns. Given the difficulty BOLI has had historically accessing the GF, we believe that earmarking this funding rivulet is good public policy.

The Oregon Trial Lawyers Association strongly supports HB 4087.