



February 23, 2021

TO: Chair Power, Vice-Chair Wallan, and Members of the House Subcommittee on Civil Law

RE: House Bill 2205, The Just Enforcement Act

Portland Jobs with Justice **strongly supports HB 2205 to give workers the power they need to enforce their rights at work. Portland Jobs with Justice** is a coalition of over 100 labor, faith, community and student organizations taking action for workers rights and economic justice, especially with those most marginalized by our economic system such as people of color, immigrants, LGBTQ people and women.

All workers should be able to entrust that their rights will be protected and that the state will enforce laws meant to protect them. Throughout the pandemic, state agencies received record numbers of reports of workplace abuse and health and safety violations. During 2020, OR OSHA received complaints from 23 of the 35 largest workplace COVID outbreaks but were only able to investigate two. OR OSHA received ten times as many complaints as they do in a normal year.

Because it's clear that the state lacks the capacity to enforce existing labor law, the legislature should enact the Just Enforcement Act (House Bill 2205). This legislation allows workers and organizations to enforce labor laws when the state cannot do so. The Act generates new resources for enforcement agencies, expanding their capacity to ensure workers have protections they count on. When frontline and essential workers work in industries which have seen the most widespread workplace outbreaks of COVID-19, more robust safety enforcement is essential to public health for our entire community.

Just enforcement will make workplaces safer for workers who face sexual harassment and empower Black workers who are more likely to experience retaliation for complaints. When state agencies do not have capacity to take on their cases, workers are often left with no other avenues to address the harm done to them. Providing an avenue for workers to partner with trusted community organizations to file suits on the state's behalf would allow workers who fear speaking out alone and risking their jobs to have the community at their backs while they do so. Portland Jobs with Justice urges you to support HB 2205.

Signed,

Portland Jobs with Justice