



Oregon Coalition of Christian Voices

HB 2205 OCCV urges passage of the Just Enforcement Act

Testimony for the House Committee on Human Services– John Calhoun – 2.24.2021

The Oregon Coalition of Christian Voices is committed to seeking justice in Oregon for our vulnerable neighbors. When workers are not paid for their work as required by law it is our obligation as a society to step in and see that they are given proper restitution. Typically, the workers who are robbed by employers are paid the least to begin with.

Oregon has been failing workers who have their wages stolen by employers for several decades due to inadequate enforcement of our laws. Part of the solution would be to add significantly to BOLI's enforcement staff and bring it back to the levels it had in the 70's. However, for many sessions, this legislature has been unwilling to provide BOLI with the resources to do that. The result is that wage theft continues unabated and our lowest paid workers continue being exploited.

HB 2205 is a carefully crafted supplement to adding BOLI staff. It has been designed to take into consideration concerns raised by the business community over past proposals. The fear of nuisance law suits is addressed in this bill and should not concern businesses that are complying with our state labor laws. Frankly honest business owners should support this bill because it will stop competitors that cheat their workers from unfairly taking business away from the honest employers. I say this as someone who owned wholly or partially a number of small businesses over my business career.

As a society we will be judged by how we take care of the most vulnerable; the sick, the poor, the homeless, the elderly. Victims of wage theft are amongst the most vulnerable. Failure to take action by this legislature will not reflect well on who we are. It is time to stand up and fix this long-term hole in our justice system. If the theft taking place was done with a gun, I am quite confident legislators would be demanding action. Because the theft is done with a pen does not make it any less of a crime.

Vote yes on HB 2205.