



February 23, 2021

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

The Fair Shot For All Coalition is writing in strong support of HB 2205 to ensure that every Oregon worker is treated fairly.

Throughout our nation's history, we have excluded Black and Indigenous people and other people of color, including immigrants, from basic protections and distanced them from the fruits of their own labor. From the exclusion of Black agricultural and domestic workers from the Social Security Act and Fair Labor Standards Act in the 1930s to the exclusion of farmworkers from benefits like overtime and earned income tax credits that still exist as barriers for workers here in Oregon.

While Oregon has been a leader at passing laws to ensure worker safety and community health such as paid sick leave, wage and hour protections, and discrimination policies, our enforcement has not kept up, leaving those same structural inequities in place. As our workforce has steadily grown and reports of abuse have flooded our agencies, budget cuts have left them—and workers—with little recourse. Most at risk are the same workers we've intentionally left out of workplace protections time and time again, workers who identify as Black, Indigenous, Latinx, or a person of color; women; immigrants; and workers earning a low-wage, all of whom are significantly more likely to experience abuse in the workplace.

In fact, a recent report from the National Employer Law Project showed that 1 in 7 Black workers avoided raising concerns to their employer for fear of retaliation—more than twice the average rate of 6 percent for all survey respondents. While a 6 percent rate appears modest, even a conservative estimate means this represents 1.9 million U.S. workers—an alarmingly high number in terms of potential viral spread. The report also showed that during the pandemic three in four Black workers (73 percent) have gone to work even though they believed they were seriously risking their health or the health of family member, compared with 64 percent of non-Black Latinx workers, 49 percent of white workers, and 56 percent of workers overall.

These responses and experiences during the pandemic tell us what we already know - that the effects of racism, sexism and other structural and systemic inequities are still very much in place. We must act now to ensure that our economic recovery is based on just enforcement of our policies to create a better, more equitable normal in Oregon or we will continue to leave these same workers behind yet again.

The Just Enforcement Act (HB 2205) would provide workers with a voice in their workplace and create a revenue stream for state agencies to increase enforcement capacity. 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 - due to historic and ongoing racism and other forms of discrimination and disempowerment - to be empowered with the support needed to navigate our systems. **We strongly encourage you to vote yes on HB 2205 for just enforcement of our laws.**

About Fair Shot -

Our coalition is governed by a steering committee that includes: Asian Pacific Network of Oregon (APANO), Basic Rights Oregon (BRO), Causa Oregon, Family Forward Oregon, Oregon AFL-CIO, Oregon AFSCME, Oregon Education Association (OEA), Pineros y Campesinos Unidos del Noroeste (PCUN), Planned Parenthood Advocates of Oregon (PPAO), Service Employees International Union (SEIU), United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 555, Unite Oregon, and Urban League of Portland. For a full list of our coalition members and priorities visit www.fairshotoregon.org.