

Co-Chair Woods, Co-Chair Gomberg, and members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of SB 5515. LIUNA represents about 4,000 members across the state of Oregon who primarily work in the construction trades as Laborers. As a labor union, we are a key stakeholder in the success of the Bureau of Labor & Industries (BOLI) as an agency. We believe that BOLI's budget request is critical to workers and businesses in Oregon, and we will explain how some of BOLI's key funding requests are, from our perspective, of vital importance.

BOLI's workload is increasing: the agency reported a **73% increase in Wage and Hour cases since last year**, along with a current backlog of **over 1,000 civil rights cases**. We should feel heartened that workers in Oregon have avenues under the law to speak up when they believe they've experienced a violation related to their wages or hours. However, we must ensure that our state is prepared to meet their courage with action. To that end, we want to highlight the following requests from BOLI and why they matter:

- **Funding for two mediator positions:** aside from the need to address the aforementioned increase and backlog in cases, BOLI's mediation model will speed the resolution of cases. This process will have outsized benefit for the agency's mission as a whole, because it will free up important agency prosecutorial capacity and help parties come to a resolution more easily.
- **Position authority for two investigators and one support position in Wage and Hour:** wage and hour investigators and their support staff do critical work in ensuring that complaints get addressed. Most critically, when workers have not received proper pay, they must rely upon BOLI to ensure they are able to pay their bills; this has a direct impact on workers and their families, and slower resolutions to cases harms Oregonians.
- **Grant programs supporting registered apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs:** apprenticeship programs are perhaps the best example of cooperation between business and labor, and they help ensure that Oregon is poised to meet workforce needs and maintain a competitive edge over other states. BOLI's support to these programs is a powerful demonstration of our state's commitment to the next generation of skilled and trained workers in Oregon.
- **Making temporary positions permanent (business assistance and veterans' services):** BOLI has demonstrated a commitment to serving Eastern Oregon's businesses in compliance with state laws and to assisting veterans in transitioning into civilian employment through two temporary positions. Maintaining service levels in both of these areas matter, and making these positions permanent will allow the agency to serve these populations in a consistent manner over time.
- **Administrative law officer position:** the Legislature has rightly enacted greater worker protections over the past several years. By funding an administrative law officer, this will ensure that worker protections are enforced, as well as ensuring BOLI as an agency is following proper procedures.

- **Public records support position:** transparency in public records is essential for advocacy organizations, and is a fundamental right for all Oregonians. Our union has made use of public records requests to fulfill essential functions as a watchdog organization, both at BOLI and many other agencies. Staffing the positions that fulfill these records requests is essential in meeting the time requirements under public records laws that agencies must uphold, as well as ensuring values of transparency are protected.

We believe that BOLI's requests demonstrate their commitment to serving both the workers and businesses of Oregon. We urge support on SB 5515.