



Support for SB 5515

March 8, 2023

To: Co-Chairs Woods and Gomberg, Members of the Joint Subcommittee on Transportation and Economic Development

From: Russell Lum, Political Organizer, Oregon Nurses Association

Re: Support for Senate Bill 5515

Dear Co-Chairs Woods and Gomberg and members of the subcommittee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony for Senate Bill 5515, the Bureau of Labor and Industries budget, on behalf of the Oregon Nurses Association (ONA). ONA is a nurses union and professional association representing over 15,000 health care workers and providers, including registered nurses, advanced practice nurses, and allied health workers. Our members work in urban and rural hospitals, clinics, school-based health centers, home health care, and county health departments across Oregon.

Our members and all workers need the critical role BOLI plays in ensuring fairness and opportunity in, and to some extent beyond, the workplaces of Oregon. BOLI takes on a preponderance of the State's charge to see that workers across the state are treated lawfully and unlawful practices are held to account. Oregon should be a state when cheating workers or discriminating against them is rare to nonexistent. Oregonians understand this and organize and demand better work environments and more effective systems of complaint and remedy. The legislature has responded, with an advance, session by session, in recent years, of the state's commitment on civil rights, workplace protections, and anti-discrimination.

Pivotal to all this, BOLI must be resourced to handle the enforcement load that this work sets up. BOLI's resources are still sorely behind past precedent, at a time when the economy is growing and causing workers new forms of complaint and injustice.

For some of our members, new productivity metrics — for our case, how many patients seen in a day — mean more meals and breaks, intended to be ensured by law, are missed. Missed meals and breaks are a dominant theme for nurses in fact across ONA's membership and across care settings. ONA has sought assistance from BOLI on meals and breaks on numerous occasions, and we need the agency at the ready to respond when health care workers say they can't be the



employees they need to be (or that their patients needs them to be) because of the unlawful working conditions.

BOLI's budget request positions the agency to more adequately meet current challenges. The budget will fund two investigators who work conciliation processes, to bring cases to a close with greater speed and satisfaction to the parties. It further will fund two investigators and a support staff to conduct wage and hour work, especially urgent when considering that a worker's owed pay hangs in the balance of resolution of these cases. The budget is an investment in BOLI's often innovative approaches in Civil Rights and apprenticeships as well.

With needs so great and work so far-reaching, this budget proposal reads as a clear call to back our workforce. Please join voices in worker advocacy and unions, the Executive branch, and many other supporters in placing high priority in funding the Bureau of Labor and Industries for the biennium.

Sincerely,

Russell Lum