

TO: Oregon State House Committee on Business and Labor

FR: Amber McCoy

ATTN: Chairman Holvey, Vice-Chairs Elmer, and Sosa

RE: HB 2057

March 8, 2023

Good morning, Chair Holvey and members of this committee.

My name is Amber McCoy. I currently reside in Portland, Oregon. I am testifying today as a victim of wage theft in the construction industry.

From 2003 when I entered the construction industry until I became a Union Carpenter in 2006, I experienced Wage theft. I worked on residential and commercial projects across Oregon and Washington with multiple employers. I remodeled a historic building on Capitol Hill in Seattle for a multi-national clothing company, built an addition to a yoga studio in SE Portland, and did many other jobs over the 3 years. In all these jobs, the employer avoided their responsibility to pay FICA and worker's comp, nor did they pay me overtime or give me breaks. It was common for them not to pull construction permits, instruct us to work odd hours, and place paper over windows to avoid detection. These practices were so rampant in construction that I did not know that it could be a legitimate business until I joined a Union.

While the lost social security and wages impacted me, I'm lucky compared to many of my friends. One such person that was not so lucky is my best friend. We worked in construction together and became a family. Before he could follow me into the Union, he was injured on the job while working for one of the many contractors that got away with robbing their workers and the State of Oregon.

My friend did not have health benefits through his employer, and although he was injured on the job, the employer refused to pay workman's comp. The effects of this on his family were painful to watch. As his family crumbled under the stress and the strain, I watched the State of Oregon step up and provide assistance. They gave him and his entire family Health insurance and provided homeless services for the family members at various times when they no longer had a place to live. The State of Oregon paid for and provided all of this when it was not their responsibility; the responsibility should have been placed on the contractor he worked for, but it did not! Unfortunately, his youngest child became a ward of the state, and I was paid to be his foster parent until he aged out at 21.

These practices have become rampant because the General Contractors purposefully turn a blind eye believing themselves not responsible for others. But I assert they are accountable for ensuring the sub Contractors they select operate legitimately. The ability to get a cheap bid by selecting unscrupulous companies should not be allowed. The General Contractors must be held accountable for who they

choose to do business with because they will only change their behavior once they bear some responsibility.

Thank you for your time,

A. McCoy