



5/9/23

Thank you, Chair Taylor, and thank you to the Members of the committee. Good morning; for the record, my name is James Cadore of the Oregon Chapter of the National Association of Minority Contractors. We represent over 150 Businesses of Color in Oregon, from small one-person shops to the largest Black-owned construction company west of the Mississippi. We are opposed to this bill.

Wage theft is a crime, and it is a crime that impacts Communities of Color the hardest. However, this bill creates a less transparent, parallel, and more uncertain process to BOLI's existing but severely underfunded enforcement mechanisms. We have heard today that BOLI has a year-long backlog, which is true, but that backlog exists because the Legislature has not adequately funded BOLI for the last decade, resulting in severe understaffing and backlog.

We have also heard that with the passage of this bill, General Contractors will be able to file lawsuits on behalf of workers; to say that the legal process is faster than BOLI's investigation and enforcement mechanisms, even as they are now, is disingenuous.

But what concerns our Members most about this bill is that by shifting liability for unpaid wages, this Legislature will unduly harm Small Businesses of Color that are not at fault while further disincentivizing hiring new construction companies, especially Companies of Color.

Those who work in our industry understand that it is primarily relationship based. If this bill passes, assuming our industry will self-correct is unrealistic. We have seen that when faced with uncertainty and risk, general contractors go with the familiar with what they know.

Which, as we've seen, is a company with demographics much like their own.

This further endangers any chance Contractors of Color have at building generational wealth in Oregon, as our white counterparts have. As this was the only State in the Union to constitutionally ban Black Americans like me from living in our State, our Communities of Color have a long road to climb. And this bill is doing us *no* favors.

NAMC-Oregon and our Partners want to work with you, Senators, and your colleagues to improve Oregonians of Color lives and fight for *true* economic equality. We desperately want to increase the funding and transparency of our existing Bureau and its enforcement mechanisms to address the crime of wage theft and retaliation meaningfully. We asked our friends at the Carpenter's Union to join us in that effort, but unfortunately, we were rejected out of hand.

At NAMC-Oregon, our motto is Building Bridges and Breaking Barriers, and we respectfully request that the Legislature join us in that effort. But this bill is not it.



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Thank you for your time, Senators, and I am happy to answer any questions.