



March 8, 2023

To: Co-Chairs Wood and Gomberg
Members of the Joint Subcommittee On Transportation and Economic Development

FR: Shane Nehls, Ironworkers Local 29

RE: SB 5515 Support

Co-Chair Wood and Gomberg, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on Senate Bill 5515. The Ironworkers Local 29 represents more than 1,700 Journeyworkers and registered apprentices in Oregon and Southwest Washington. Our members work on projects in both urban and rural areas of our state and are a critical part of the skilled local workforce that builds critical infrastructure in our state. We know firsthand that the Bureau of Labor and Industries (BOLI) budget is crucial to the success of both workers and business in Oregon.

BOLI's core work revolves around investigating Wage and Civil Right complaints. These cases can range from unpaid wage disputes, to discrimination in the workplace or in housing and have a huge impact on workers lives. Over the past few years, **BOLI's workload has increased exponentially and the agency reported a 73% increase in Wage and Hour cases** since last year, along with a current backlog of more than 1,000 civil rights cases. Long delays have a deleterious effect on Oregon's workforce and business as well, all parties deserve a fair and quick resolution.

BOLI's budget must allow the agency to meet the demand and make workers whole and help businesses function. We want to highlight some of the budget requests that the agency put together that we feel would have a big impact on Oregonians:

- **Funding for two mediator positions.** These positions will be dedicated to mediating the backlog of claims in the Civil Rights and Wage and Hour divisions
- **Funding for two investigator positions** to work on Wage and Hour claims along with funding for a support position to help with the intake and claims processing workload
- **Funding for an administrative law officer.** The Legislature has greatly increased worker protections in the past several years, and this position will ensure that worker protections are enforced, as well as ensuring BOLI as an agency is following proper procedures

The Bureau of Labor and Industry is a critical agency to Oregon and their budget requests demonstrate their commitment to serving both workers and businesses. For many Oregonians, a timely resolution of Wage and Hour cases or discrimination cases will have a profound impact on their lives—Ironworkers Local 29 urge your support of SB 5515.