

Written Testimony in Support of SB 1506-1
Jason Fussell, Business Manager
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Chair, Vice Chair, and members of the Committee,

My name is Jason Fussell, and I am the Business Manager of Iron Workers Local 29, representing skilled construction workers across Oregon. I submit this testimony in strong support of SB 1506-1.

These bills address a longstanding problem: the lack of stable, ongoing funding for the Bureau of Labor and Industries (BOLI). Oregon cannot effectively protect workers' rights or ensure fair competition among employers without a labor enforcement agency that is adequately staffed and sustainably funded.

SB 1506-1 establish a permanent funding structure for BOLI by creating a separate Worker Benefit Fund that does not affect the existing workers' compensation system in any way. Workers' compensation remains untouched. This distinction is important and should be clearly understood.

The cost to workers is minimal—approximately two dollars per year—yet this modest contribution is expected to generate roughly \$19 million annually. That revenue is critical to maintaining current staff, supporting new positions, and allowing BOLI to continue reducing its wage and hour backlog. For workers seeking justice and for employers seeking timely resolution of complaints, this investment matters.

The bills also update the prevailing wage fee cap, increasing it from \$7,500 to \$12,500. This cap has not been adjusted since 2009. The increase is estimated to generate an additional \$1.5 million dedicated to sustaining prevailing wage enforcement. This is a reasonable adjustment that reflects the scale of modern construction projects and the importance of maintaining a fair bidding environment.

Today, BOLI is significantly under-resourced compared to other labor enforcement agencies. Oregon's own legislative data shows that Washington's Department of Labor and Industries employs roughly twice the staff—after adjusting for inflation—in labor standards and prevailing wage enforcement. That gap places unnecessary strain on BOLI staff and delays outcomes for workers and employers alike.

The Legislature must act this session. Without a permanent funding solution, the one-time funded positions supporting backlog reduction will expire at the end of the 2027–2029 biennium. If funding is not secured now, costs will increase later, and experienced staff may leave for more stable employment, undermining the progress BOLI has made.

Oregonians should not have to wait years to have their workplace rights enforced. SB 1506-1 and HB 4027-1 put BOLI on a sustainable path so it can deliver timely, effective services that benefit workers and employers across the state.

For these reasons, I urge your support for SB 1506-1.

Respectfully submitted,

Jason Fussell

Business Manager

Iron Workers Local 29