



Representative Lamar Wise  
Oregon House District 48

HB 4089 - Wage Theft

House Labor and Workforce Development | February 4th 2026 3:00 PM

Chair, Vice Chairs and members of the committee: For the record, my name is Representative Lamar Wise, and I represent House District 48, serving communities in outer Southeast Portland and North Clackamas County. I am proud to submit testimony in strong support of House Bill 4089.

HB 4089 makes a clear and necessary statement: wage theft is theft. When an employer fails to pay earned wages, withholds tips, misclassifies workers, or uses unlicensed contractors to evade accountability, the harm is no different from any other form of theft. Workers lose income they rely on for rent, food, childcare, and transportation, and law-abiding businesses are undercut by bad actors who profit by breaking the rules.

In House District 48, I hear directly from workers, particularly immigrants, workers of color, and low-wage workers, who experience wage theft and feel they have little recourse. Many are hesitant to report violations for fear of retaliation or job loss. HB 4089 strengthens enforcement in a way that centers accountability on those who intentionally exploit workers, while preserving civil and administrative remedies for those seeking to recover their wages.

This bill is carefully structured. It does not criminalize mistakes or good-faith disputes. Instead, it targets intentional and repeated conduct, including failure to pay agreed-upon wages, minimum wage violations, unpaid overtime, and the diversion or withholding of earned compensation. By explicitly including these actions within the crime of theft of services, HB 4089 closes gaps that have allowed wage theft to persist with limited consequences.

HB 4089 also improves coordination across state agencies by requiring referrals when patterns of wage theft are identified. This ensures that enforcement is consistent, data-informed, and focused on the most serious violations. At the same time, the bill makes clear that criminal prosecution does not preclude workers from pursuing civil or administrative relief, an essential protection for workers seeking to be made whole.

Finally, the provisions addressing unlicensed labor contractors and misuse of contractor licenses are critical for worker safety and consumer protection. Responsible contractors who follow the law should not have to compete with those who cut costs by exploiting workers and misleading the public.

At its core, HB 4089 is about dignity, fairness, and trust in our labor market. Oregon's economy works best when workers are paid what they are owed and businesses compete on a level playing field. This bill moves us closer to that goal.

I urge the committee to support HB 4089 and advance it forward.