



February 4th, 2026

TO: House Committee On Labor and Workforce Development
FROM: PCUN
SUBJECT: Support HB 4089- Strengthening Wage Theft Protections

Chair Grayber, Vice-Chairs Elmer and Muñoz, and members of the committee,

My name is Cynthia Ramirez and I am providing testimony on behalf of PCUN, Oregon's Farmworker Union.

PCUN represents farmworkers and working-class Latine families across Oregon who are essential to our state's agricultural economy and food system. We strongly support HB 4089 because it recognizes a simple truth our communities have lived with for decades: wage theft is theft, and it causes real, lasting harm to families and communities.

For farmworkers, wage theft is not theoretical. It happens when people are not paid for all the hours they work, when overtime is denied, when workers are misclassified, or when labor contractors disappear without paying what is owed. These are not paperwork errors. They are choices that take food off the table and stability away from families who are already struggling.

We know wage theft in Oregon is widespread and deeply underreported. Available data shows that hundreds of millions of dollars are stolen from workers every year, and tens of thousands of workers are underpaid. Yet even when workers come forward, the system often fails them. Nearly half of the wages and penalties ordered by the state go unpaid.

Civil penalties alone have not been enough, especially in industries like agriculture, where workers face language barriers, fear of retaliation, and fear tied to immigration enforcement. When enforcement lacks real consequences, exploitation becomes routine.

HB 4089 changes that. It recognizes that wage theft is economic theft, and it should be treated with the seriousness it deserves. By strengthening the definition of wage theft, holding employers accountable when they knowingly steal wages, and addressing abuse by

unlicensed labor contractors, this bill targets the real mechanisms that harm farmworkers and working-class families.

This bill is not about punishing honest mistakes. It is about accountability. It is about protecting families, supporting responsible employers, and ensuring that Oregon's economy is not built on stolen labor.

Oregon's farmworkers feed this state. They deserve to be paid every dollar they earn. No exceptions.

PCUN urges this committee to pass HB 4089 and affirm that in Oregon, no employer is above the law and no worker's labor is disposable.

Cynthia Ramirez
Policy Associate
PCUN