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To: House Committee on Judiciary
From: Martha Sonato, Oregon Law Center
Re: Support for HB 4111
Date: February 04, 2026

Chair Kropf, Vice-Chairs Wallan and Chotzen, and members of the committee

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in strong support for HB 4111 on behalf of the Oregon Law Center (OLC).

My name is Martha Sonato, and I am a legislative and policy advocate at the Oregon Law Center (OLC). OLC is a civil legal aid organization that provides high-quality legal services, free of charge, to low-income Oregonians statewide. Access to justice is a cornerstone of our organization's mission. Our clients come to our organization on a range of issues impacting their lives – from housing to family law issues.

Over the last couple of months, we have been working closely with organizational partners and Rep. Chotzen on this concept that we truly believe will increase access to justice for immigrant communities and provide important clarifications in our state anti-retaliatory laws when an employee lawfully updates their work documents. My oral comments today will be limited to uplifting a worker story, one who unfortunately did not feel safe disclosing their identity or appearing before you today. This worker is not an OLC client, yet their experience speaks directly to a key section of the bill. I hope their story helps illustrate the need for workplace protection when someone lawfully updates their employment documents.

"It's been a year since I was unfairly fired (for updating my work documents), but I remember it well. I cried, I didn't know what to do; I had been working there for ten years. I thought they would do the right thing (when I gave them my updated work documents), but they didn't.

In my case, it all started when we held a protest at the workplace related to our rights, and I think a lot about what happened to us afterward. We spoke up, and the employer wanted the immigrant workers to remain completely silent. Many bad things happened for those who participated in the protest: mistreatment, discrimination, different treatment. We were punished. Those of us who participated were intimidated.

And they succeeded: now I'm not sure I'll participate in trying to improve my workplace next time. Because ultimately, I was fired by my employer when I tried to update my work

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paperwork with them- I think they were already upset at me for my workplace action, so when I brought in my work permit, they fired me.

Many immigrants are used to receiving this kind of treatment; we normalize it. I'm a single mother. Being unfairly fired was very, very difficult for me. And now I feel like I have to keep quiet.

It hurts to be treated this way despite having our documents in order. What this employer did was racism, discrimination. What the Legislature is trying to do is to prevent anyone else from suffering like this is important. These are very sad times. Thank you.”

OLC urges this committee to pass HB 4111 with a due pass recommendation. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Martha Sonato
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Oregon Law Center

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