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Employment Law

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Via Email

Senate Committee on Workforce

Re: Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 750
On behalf of the Oregon Trial Lawyers Association

Chair Taylor and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of SB 750, the Oregon Corporate Accountability Act. Oregon Trial Lawyers Association (OTLA) members fight for workers who are subjected to wage theft and other unlawful employment practices. OTLA members strongly support the efforts of SB 750 to ensure workers have access to enforcement of existing employment protections.

The legislature has demonstrated its strong support for the hard-working people of Oregon though recently passing a livable minimum wage, paid sick leave, pay equity, and a fair workweek.

In order for these policies to be effective, however, they must be enforceable. SB 750 is a powerful mechanism to ensure enforcement of existing laws in Oregon.

SB750 draws upon enforcement models that exist at state and federal levels. The concept is simple: there are certain enforcement mechanisms for existing employment laws that only the Bureau of Labor and Industries (BOLI) may pursue; in order to allow for wider enforcement, BOLI may allow individuals to pursue these laws on its behalf. In consideration for this bargain, the individual returns to BOLI a significant portion of any penalties obtained if the individual proves employment laws were broken. BOLI, in turn, would be infused with resources for more enforcement and technical assistance.

When employment laws are unevenly enforced, those businesses that ignore the laws enjoy a competitive advantage over those businesses that follow the laws. There should be an even playing field for all businesses, and SB 750 will encourage more even enforcement of the laws.

Laws that this body has already determined are vital to the Oregon workforce.

Oregon has been on the forefront of efforts to modernize workplace protections. But the current framework undermines our ability to hold bad actors accountable. OTLA supports the Oregon Corporate Accountability Act because it's time to make our workplace standards real and ensure basic fairness for people on the job.

OTLA urges a yes vote on SB 750.

Sincerely,
Christina Stephenson