



**April 4th, 2019**

**To: Senate Committee on Workforce**

**Re: Testimony in support of SB 750**

My name is Iris Hodge, on behalf of Main Street Alliance of Oregon a network of 4,000 small business owners across Oregon, I am writing in support of Senate Bill 750, the Oregon Corporate Accountability Act.

Main Street Alliance was founded more than 10 years ago, by small business owners, from different industries who believed in building our small business economy without a myopic focus on the bottom line. We have been active in the campaigns to enact worker- and family-friendly policies, like a livable minimum wage, paid sick leave, retirement savings and a fair workweek. These policies are crucial to building an economy that works for everyone, not just corporate interests.

But these gains – as well as longstanding protections against sexual harassment and discrimination, and basic standards like overtime and safe workplaces – are not delivering stability for thousands of families because they're not effectively enforced.

The civil servants at BOLI do amazing work—but there are far too few of them to meet the challenge. BOLI staffing has not kept up with the growth of Oregon's workforce. In fact, since 1993, the number of BOLI staff has *shrunk* by over a third. For all of Oregon, BOLI has only 34 staff in the division that enforces minimum wage, overtime, and other basic standards. That means that for every civil servant in the Wage and Hour division, there are 55,487 workers! BOLI just doesn't have the resources to fully enforce our workplace laws.

Big companies that want to profit by cheating workers know they will probably get away with it. Between 2006 and 2017, wage theft in Oregon exceeded [\\$45 million](#)—money that should be going into working families' pockets, our customers and community members that we rely on to keep our businesses afloat. And the brave women who have spoken up to say #MeToo have demonstrated that too many people face illegal harassment on the job. Without basic accountability, lawbreaking companies can out-compete employers who do the right thing—mostly smaller employers.

The only solution is to dramatically expand BOLI's capacity to identify lawbreakers and impose consequences for violating our rights. Main Street Alliance supports SB 750, the Oregon Corporate Accountability Act (OCAA), because it would increase funding for BOLI and allow workers to partner with government to hold lawbreakers accountable. Under OCAA, whistleblowers would identify companies that are cheating workers and pitch in to bring enforcement actions. Most of the penalties recovered in these cases would go to the state. In other words, law-breakers—not taxpayers—would foot the bill for increasing our enforcement resources, a smart reform in this time of tight budgets.

OCAA would also enable BOLI to adopt innovative enforcement strategies designed to reach workers who are most vulnerable to workplace abuses, including low-wage workers and immigrant workers. OCAA would designate a portion of revenues for partnerships with community organizations that are trusted by vulnerable workers, which have proven effective in educating these workers about their rights and empowering them to confront violations. The bill would also allow workers who fear retaliation to participate in OCAA actions anonymously, represented by community organizations.

Oregon has been on the forefront of efforts to modernize workplace protections. But BOLI's shrinking budget and fine-print forced arbitration clauses undermine our ability to hold bad actors accountable. Main Street Alliance 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.

Respectfully,

Iris Hodge  
State Lead  
Main Street Alliance of Oregon