

BOLI Budget Requests

BILL NUMBER:

HB 5015

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THE SHORT VERSION

BOLI budget requests will increase capacity for addressing worker complaints and civil rights violations, as well as help to modernize systems and make for a more efficient agency.

Background

The Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries (BOLI) is facing an unprecedented crisis that threatens worker protections and civil rights enforcement in the state.

Systemic underfunding over the past four decades has left the agency unable to cope with the escalating demand for its services.

As the agency tasked with enforcing key employment laws and protecting Oregonians from discrimination,

harassment, and wage theft, BOLI's current capacity is woefully inadequate to meet the needs of Oregonians.

BOLI has fewer employees today than it did in the 1980s. Since then Oregon's population and workforce has only grown.

Without adequate funding, BOLI will be forced to dismiss hundreds, if not thousands, of cases due to capacity constraints. This will leave workers without recourse and allow repeat offenders who make wage theft their business model to operate with impunity.

The requested budget increases will not only add additional staff and investigators but will also help to modernize agency systems and processes, making intake and case management more efficient generally. That's a win for workers, taxpayers, and for businesses banking on an efficient and quick process.

BOLI's 2025 Budget Proposal:

Request	Purpose	Staff Needed to address deficits	Cost
Case management replacement	New system will help address backlog & improve efficiency.	4 icons	\$1,874,835
BOLI Modernization	Investment in key positions to address recruitment, retention, and workflow challenges, to keep BOLI afloat.	20 icons	\$7,970,132
Civil Rights Division Sustainability	Additional intake staff, mediator, and investigators to keep up with the volume of complaints.	12 icons	\$2,580,149
Wage & Hour Division Sustainability	Collections, intake, and customer service positions to allow investigators to focus on case resolution.	15 icons	\$2,486,133
Operations Sustainability	Investment in key positions to grow HR and IT capacity, ADA compliance, and more.	4 icons	\$1,323,261

(Current biennial budget: \$59,600,000) **Total Request: + \$16,234,509**

Why it matters

Every year, Oregon workers lose over **\$250,000,000 to wage theft.**

For those workers trying to obtain justice, **62%** of BOLI complainants say they are experiencing economic hardship related to their case.

Many of the issues that the Legislature has identified as priorities, particularly housing prices and food insecurity, are exacerbated by wage theft and Oregon's structural difficulty in enforcing wage laws.

Since February 2024, BOLI reports that out of its cases,



640 complainants say they are experiencing housing insecurity



385 complainants say they are struggling with medical bills



638 complainants say they are struggling with food expenses

By adequately resourcing BOLI to **enforce wage theft and other laws that are already on the books**, we can make a significant difference in many workers' lives.

In September, the media reported on the structural deficits within BOLI and the necessary triaging that the agency was forced to perform in order to address the gap between resources and demand for services. Approving BOLI's budget asks is a good step toward correcting this imbalance.

The Oregonian

Oregon Labor Bureau will begin dismissing wage claims from workers earning more than \$53K

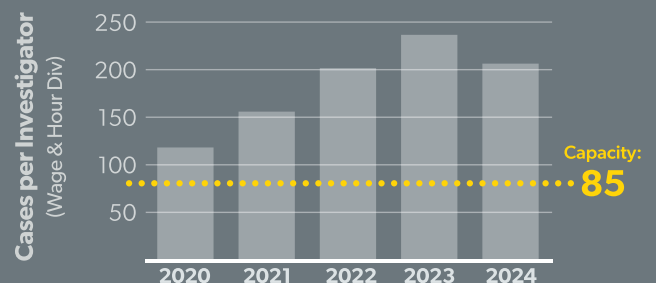
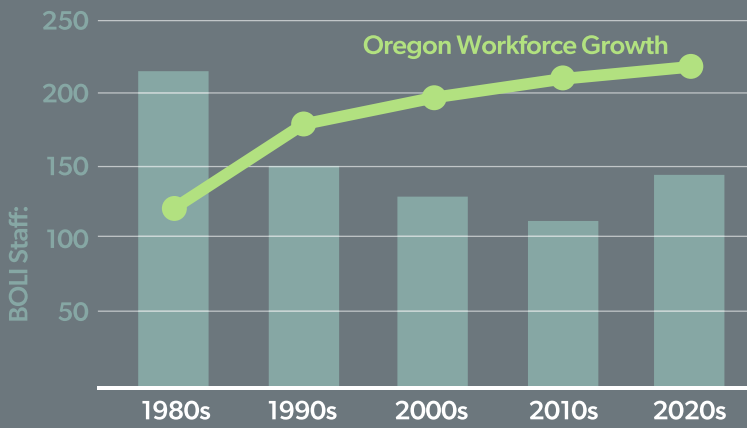
By Jamie Goldberg

September 24, 2024

“... “Our proposed earnings threshold for triage is a last-resort decision driven by necessity,” Rachel Mann, spokesperson for the agency, wrote in an email to The Oregonian/OregonLive Tuesday. “We don't have the resources to help everyone, and we are determined to prioritize those who are paid the least.”

...[Commissioner] Stephenson said the agency's wage and hour division employs only 10 investigators, each of whom has been asked to process more than 200 claims a year, given the 208% increase in wage claims the agency saw from 2020 to 2024. That's more than double the 85 claims per investigator that the agency considers to be full capacity.

BOLI's workload is fast outpacing its staff and budget:



The Wage and Hour Division has experienced a **208% increase in wage claims** from 2020 to 2024, overwhelming its already limited capacity and exacerbating food and housing insecurity.