

Chair Taylor, Vice-Chair Hayden, and members of the committee,

For the record, my name is Zack Culver and I am the Business Manager/Secretary-Treasurer Laborers Local 737. Our union represents about 3,000 workers across Oregon and over five hundred thousand members throughout the U.S. and Canada, with the majority being Laborers in the construction industry.

I am here today to testify in opposition to SB 1566, and any such legislation that would undermine crucial prevailing wage standards in our state.

I have been a Union Laborer for 28 years, and I know how important prevailing wage is to members of my union and construction workers throughout our communities. Prevailing wages allow us to support our families, maintain health insurance, and retire with dignity.

Many members of our union have bought their first homes because of their prevailing wage jobs which have long stood as a vital pathway towards economic mobility and for working families to be able to build a decent life. And that is why I am here to testify today. SB 1566, and any other bill that seeks to create exemptions and carve outs to prevailing wage, will not solve our housing crisis. Diminishing Oregon's prevailing wage law will put housing further out of reach for construction workers around the state. Making prevailing wage out to be an underlying impediment in the context of our current housing crisis is both deeply misplaced and simply wrong. Setting up long-standing prevailing wage law as the factor constraining the creation of affordable housing is indeed a false choice.

Too many workers in Oregon and around the country cannot afford housing in our communities because wages have simply not kept up with the rising costs of living. Despite record corporate profits, workers are struggling to put roofs over their heads. Yet, prevailing wages are critical in helping workers attain and maintain housing. Weakening it is the absolute wrong direction.

A key approach to helping solve our affordable housing crisis is to address the real reason many Oregonians cannot afford homes: their jobs simply do not pay enough. We believe that the Legislature should look to focus continuing energy on passing policy which holds businesses to fair standards that support workers making a decent livelihood and otherwise incentivizes good paying jobs throughout our communities.

Proposed carve-outs to prevailing wage will only make our housing crisis worse, not better. I urge you to vote no on SB 1566.

Thank you for your time and consideration of these comments.