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Avakian praises new worker protection against wage violations

"Strong wage enforcement helps workers and creates a level playing field for employers," says Avakian

PORTLAND—Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries Commissioner Brad Avakian praised worker advocates and the bipartisan group of Oregon legislators who supported HB 2977B, a bill creating new tools to protect Oregon workers in the construction sector.

The bill now heads to Governor John A. Kitzhaber for signature after a vote of 20-10 in the Oregon Senate.

"**Strong wage enforcement helps workers and ensures a level playing field for employers playing by the rules,"** said Commissioner Avakian. **"This bill will help workers and create new accountability tools for the construction sector."**

Avakian noted the broad and diverse coalition of labor, faith leaders, employers and community organizations that worked to pass the measure.

"Vulnerable workers deserve protection from abuses and unscrupulous employers," said Avakian. "**Our agency is committed to fighting for workers while providing guidance to Oregon businesses so that they can avoid violations in the first place."**

Since 2008, the Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries has recovered $20 million for workers treated unfairly. The agency can assess penalties and seek debarment of contractors who violate workers' rights. In addition, the bureau directs $785,000 from its wage security fund to employees who never receive final paychecks after businesses become insolvent or close their doors.

BOLI's technical assistance program also works to help employers navigate state and federal regulations to avoid violations, responding to nearly 20,000 inquiries from businesses large and small.

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The mission of the Bureau of Labor and Industries is to protect employment rights, advance employment opportunities, and protect access to housing and public accommodations free from discrimination.