



**Commissioner Brad Avakian**  
Bureau of Labor & Industries

## **Press Release**

For Immediate Distribution

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### **Avakian Launches Investigation of Portland's P Club**

*BOLI Commissioner pursuing allegations of sexual orientation, gender identity discrimination*

**PORTLAND-** The Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries (BOLI) is opening an investigation through its Civil Rights Division of allegations that the P Club, a North Portland bar, and owner Christopher Penner actively attempted to exclude individuals from the establishment based on their sexual orientation and gender identity. The formal complaint initiating the investigation, filed by BOLI Commissioner Brad Avakian, alleges that Christopher Penner phoned at least one regular patron and left voice messages asking the patron and their group to stay away from the P Club on Friday nights because their presence might lead some people to believe it is a “gay bar.”

“Part of BOLI’s mission is to protect access to public accommodations free from discrimination, and that is a serious commitment,” Avakian said. “Through a formal investigation, we can ensure that all Oregonians are being afforded equal access to the public places of their choice. And if we find evidence of violations, they will be aggressively prosecuted.”

Oregon law authorizes the BOLI Commissioner to file a complaint on behalf of the state where he has reason to believe that violations of civil rights law are occurring. This power is especially important in the area of public accommodations where individuals may feel less incentive to step forward to file a complaint on their own. After gathering and reviewing information, an investigator from BOLI’s Civil Rights Division will determine whether there is substantial evidence of one or more violations of the law.

“If the P Club, or any other business in Oregon, is trying to steer customers away based on their sexual orientation, gender identity, or any other protected basis, BOLI wants to know about it,” Avakian said. “These allegations deserve a fair and thorough investigative process—exactly what our Civil Rights Division will provide.”

BOLI protects all Oregonians from unlawful discrimination, investigating allegations of civil rights violations in workplaces, career schools, housing and public accommodations. BOLI is the only state agency empowered to investigate and prosecute these cases and the BOLI Commissioner has the authority to issue cease and desist orders, award both economic and non-economic damages and assess civil penalties for violations of civil rights law.

Visit [www.oregon.gov/BOLI](http://www.oregon.gov/BOLI) for more information about all of BOLI’s work to protect employment rights, advance employment opportunities, and protect access to housing and public accommodations free from discrimination.

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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.*