



HSCO Urges Legislature to Invest in Equitable Outcomes for Our Communities; Reject Cuts

As we begin to emerge from the pandemic, the Human Services Coalition of Oregon (HSCO) believes it's not enough just to return to normal. Normal wasn't working for too many people.

The pandemic has heightened inequities resulting from injustices of the past. The public health and economic impacts have hit Oregonians who are BIPOC the hardest. Job losses are being experienced disproportionately by women. All of this was exacerbated by the decision of the Legislature to make cuts to the human services budget during the 2020 special sessions, reducing the amount of federal matching funds available to the Oregon Department of Human Services and reducing access to needed services for vulnerable Oregonians.

Prior to COVID, current service level funding for the programs on which vulnerable Oregonians rely was not sufficient. Yet we know that supporting people early avoids more costly interventions later, particularly when programs and services are targeted to what a person or family needs to succeed now and in the future.

HSCO's Principles for the 2021-2023 Budget

The combination of better-than-expected revenue forecasts and federal aid in the American Rescue Plan give Oregon the opportunity not only to avoid painful cuts, but to make meaningful and transformative investments to ensure all Oregonians have a safe place to call home, food on the table, and conditions where our communities can thrive. HSCO urges legislators to:

1. **Begin by restoring and maintaining needed services and rejecting cuts.** Restoring the 2020 budget cuts and holding the human services budget at pre-pandemic service level or higher; maintaining, at minimum, sustainable funding for the programs that benefit the lives of low income or vulnerable Oregonians. HSCO rejects any attempt to cut services at this critical time.
2. **Lay the foundation for more resilient systems.** The pandemic has stress-tested human services programs in unprecedented ways. It exposed the depth of current inequities to access for older adults, individuals with disabilities and BIPOC Oregonians. It is time to reverse the course of leaving some Oregonians behind at any turn into that of supporting Oregonians across the board at every turn. The legislature should invest in programs and systems that make programs more human-centered, responsive to economic shocks, and more equitable. Together we can emerge stronger from this crisis and create a more resilient system for ALL Oregonians.
3. **Make one-time investments that prioritize equity and racial justice.** Oregonians who are BIPOC have experienced disproportionate harm during the pandemic, and Oregon's relief efforts should strive to make our communities whole. Aid to Oregonians - whether in the form of direct payments or improvements to services - should result in more

equitable outcomes.

4. **Build a more equitable revenue structure.** The federal investment from the American Rescue Plan buys Oregon time to make sustainable reforms to our revenue system that allow us to continue these investments for years to come. Currently, many parts of Oregon's revenue code reinforce systemic inequities. Reforms to revenue should be enacted that are:
 - a. *Progressive*: Oregonians with more wealth should contribute a larger share.
 - b. *Adequate*: Sufficient for the health, education, and wellbeing of Oregonians.
 - c. *Equitable*: foster more equitable outcomes based on race, ethnicity, gender, and ability.

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