



February 3, 2022

Re: Support for HB 4117

Chair Williams, Vice Chairs Ruiz and Sharf, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of HB 4117. My name is Jenny Lee, and I am the Deputy Director at the Coalition of Communities of Color (CCC), an alliance of culturally specific community-based organizations dedicated to collective action for racial justice.

Every child in Oregon should be able to grow up with a stable home, nutritious food, medicine when they're sick, and knowing that their basic needs will be met. For working families who struggle to make ends meet, the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) provides critical support to help children thrive. Despite the impact that the EITC can have on working families' budgets, far too many Oregon families are not receiving the credit, with Oregon consistently ranking near the bottom of states in EITC uptake. For Black, Indigenous, and other people of color (BIPOC) and immigrant and refugee Oregonians, the barriers to accessing the EITC are even greater. Meanwhile, these are some of the very families who stand to benefit the most from the credit because an inequitable economy has resulted in lower earnings for Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and Pacific Islander families.

As a coalition of culturally-specific organizations, CCC recognizes the importance of culturally-specific and culturally-responsive outreach services that are accessible to the range of communities of color in Oregon. This legislation would expand and strengthen our current network for taxpayer support by enabling community-based organizations to provide these targeted services, as well as tribal governments and rural communities to better serve their clients. Culturally specific community-based organizations are trusted by their communities and better equipped to offer services in language, helping to overcome two major barriers to accessing tax assistance for BIPOC communities. The ongoing pandemic has made it even more challenging to access tax assistance. At the same time, the EITC is more important than ever as families have been impacted by job loss and reduced earnings during the economic downturn.

Our current network for culturally specific, culturally responsive, and rural providers is inadequately resourced and overdue for expansion and innovation, especially to meet the needs of BIPOC taxpayers. We must increase the capacity of providers so more families can access these important credits. In addition to supporting the network in geographically diverse areas, the program will strengthen taxpayer outreach, education, and connection to communities by culturally specific, culturally responsive, tribal governments, and rural partners. This legislation builds on Oregon's legacy of policies to expand access to the EITC, including making ITIN filers eligible for the state EITC in 2020 and increasing the credit in 2019.

On behalf of the Coalition of Communities of Color, I ask that you support HB 4117 so that every Oregon family—wherever they live, whatever community they identify with—who is eligible for tax credits like the EITC can readily access free tax preparation and navigation resources.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jenny Lee", written over a light blue horizontal line.

Jenny Lee

Deputy Director

Coalition of Communities of Color