

February 3, 2022

House Committee on Human Services
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

Chair Williams and Members of the House Committee on Human Services,

I am writing to express the City of Gresham’s support for HB 4117.

The Gresham City Council supports public policy and budget allocations that advance equitable outcomes for Oregonians. The City supports HB 4117 because this modest investment will improve participation in the federal Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) program, particularly for the tens of thousands of low- wage working families that are not claiming this valuable resource.

HB 4117 establishes a grant program in the Department of Human Services to provide funding to culturally specific and responsive organizations, tribal governments and under-resourced rural community service organizations who help low-income residents with understanding and navigating the tax system.

Oregon is ranked next to last in terms of EITC participation, according to the Oregon Center for Public Policy. Tens of thousands of low- wage working families qualifying for the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) are not claiming this valuable resource. This is of great concern, especially at a time when we know households are struggling from the continued economic impacts of the pandemic. The EITC is one of the most effective tools for helping working families meet their basic needs and improve their lives. We must make sure those communities know about this benefit and get the help they need to claim it. HB 4117 would provide critical support to Oregonians in accessing the EITC and other tax benefits they are eligible for but are not receiving due to a variety of barriers.

Households eligible for the EITC continue to face numerous barriers to claiming the credit, including geography, language, lack of awareness of the credit, and complexity of the tax process. This legislation will strengthen the current tax assistance network and fund culturally specific and responsive providers to help taxpayers become aware of benefits, navigate the system, and file returns.

This investment will make a meaningful difference to Oregonians by lifting them from poverty and providing them financial stability.

We urge your support for HB 4117.

Sincerely,

Brian Monberg
Government Affairs Manager
City of Gresham