



April 8th, 2023

To: Joint Committee on Ways and Means  
From: **Stephen Manning, Innovation Law Lab**  
Re: Support for fully funding Oregon Worker Relief programs!

Dear Co-Chairs Steiner and Sanchez, Co-Vice Chairs Girod, Gomberg, and Smith, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Stephen Manning and I live in Portland. I am the Executive Director of Innovation Law Lab, an Oregon-based nonprofit, and a member of Oregon Worker Relief, a collective of community-based organizations striving to solve the exclusionary impacts faced by the immigrant and refugee communities in Oregon.

I ask that you fully fund all Oregon Worker Relief programs and related bills, including the Oregon Worker Relief Fund, the Climate Change Fund (HB 3124), the Home Fund (SB 918), and Universal Representation (SB 627).

Immigrants have always been part of the core fabric of our state. Immigrant and undocumented communities contribute to our collective prosperity, but are left out of the proposed state budget.

In 2020, Oregon Worker Relief proved it is possible to craft durable, effective solutions to the inhumane conditions created by a racialized immigration system designed to exploit people. Community organizers in Oregon envisioned and created the dynamic fund and it has expanded to support immigrant and migrant Oregonians facing a range of threats: lost work and wages, deadly climate disasters, barriers to small business growth, a deeply unfair legal system, and the housing crisis. The success of Oregon Worker Relief shows that community-led solutions work, and that when the community leads we set off a cascade of positive outcomes leading to stronger, healthier communities.

As a member of the Executive Committee, I have seen how human and community centered design can shape successful programs that are responsive to the needs of those most impacted. Innovation Law Lab has developed the technology and coordinated the logistics to justice so that community members like:

- Claudia didn't go hungry when she lost her job in the pandemic;
- Juan didn't have to work in extreme heat and risk his life just to pay the bills;
- Yilvert didn't have to be evicted from his apartment because he couldn't afford to pay the rent;



- Joanna was not deported while applying for asylum.

Our whole state benefits when we respect and care for each other regardless of where we were born. Oregon Worker Relief has helped keep our communities strong during hard times, but we continue to face challenging economic conditions. This is why it is essential that we fully fund all of Oregon Worker Relief programs. As a state, we must continue to invest in immigrant communities to make sure that we can all recover and thrive.

Sincerely,

Stephen Manning