

April 27, 2023

Thank you Co-Chairs Frederick and McLain and Members of the Committee.

My name is Mark Brenner. I am Co-Director of the Labor Education and Research Center at the University of Oregon, where I serve on the faculty.

I am here today to testify on behalf of HB 5025, General Fund Allocations to the Higher Education Coordinating Committee.

First, I want to thank you and the Oregon Legislature for your continued support of the Labor Education and Research Center.

For over 45 years LERC has been conducting applied research, providing technical expertise, and promoting education, training, and leadership development for working Oregonians.

A key part of our mission is to ensure that Oregon has the workforce we will need to address the economic, social, and environmental challenges facing the state.

We are also working tirelessly to make sure these are good jobs that will create shared prosperity across the state.

Equally important, our programs are designed to equip Oregonians with the tools they need to participate meaningfully in their workplaces and communities.

Recent highlights of our applied policy research include:

- An evaluation of Oregon's prevailing wage law and its impact on the cost and efficiency of public works projects.
- Best practices for meeting future workforce needs in the care sector, including ways to create sustainable career ladders for in-demand areas such as childcare and behavioral health.
- Assessing Oregon's progress providing a pathway to construction careers for historically marginalized communities and recruiting more women and workers of color to the state's registered apprenticeship programs.
- Highlighting the critical role of highly skilled workers in realizing Oregon's energy efficiency targets.

We are also very proud of our work this year providing technical assistance to a number of unions, non-profits, and state agencies. For example, we have been working with staff at the Bureau of Labor and Industries as they implement the state's new prevailing wage law and shift to a more strategic approach to enforcing the state's wage and hour laws, targeting resources to high-violation, low-complaint industries.

Emerging from the pandemic, we have also been busier than ever with our training, education, and leadership develop programs. Over the course of the past two years, we've run workshops, trainings and educational events on dozens of topics, from how to address bullying, harassment, and discrimination on the job to understanding your rights under the Public Employee Collective Bargaining Act. Close to 5,000 Oregon workers, from 417 different unions, advocacy groups, and community-based organizations have participated in LERC programs this biennium, and we've got a few dozen more scheduled for May and June!

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LERC continues to serve as a critical bridge between policy-makers, unions, worker rights advocates, and community based organizations. One great is example is the first-ever Labor Climate summit LERC co-hosted last July. Together with the Oregon AFL-CIO and the Blue-Green Alliance, we brought together 150 participants from across the state, including union members, environmental advocates, and staff from various state and federal agencies. Participants spent the day discussing how Oregon can take advantage of the large-scale investments in renewable energy, clean transportation, wildfire mitigation, and other environmental programs on the horizon, as well as how we can meet the twin goals of reducing carbon emissions while also creating family-sustaining jobs across all parts of Oregon.

Thank you for your time today, and I urge you to continue your support of the Labor Education and Research Center, along with all the critical state public service programs operated through the Higher Education Coordinating Commission.