



May 3rd, 2023

To: Joint Committee on Ways and Means
From: PCUN, Oregon's Farmworker Union
RE: PCUN Priorities in Ways & Means

Co-Chair Steiner, Co-Chair Sanchez and Members of the Joint Ways & Means Committee,

My name is Liz Marquez Gutierrez and I am the policy associate at PCUN, Oregon's Farmworker Union. At PCUN, we work to empower farmworkers and Latinx working families in Oregon to improve their working conditions through community building, organizing, and policy advocacy. In the 2023 legislative session, PCUN is focused on policies that will benefit farmworkers and working families, including budget allocations that address critical needs for some of the lowest paid workers.

Housing

Investments for community-based housing for farmworkers is critical. We are in a severe housing crisis with many farmworkers unable to afford rent. Many farmworkers experience inadequate housing conditions, leading to poor and overcrowded living conditions. [HB 3555-A](#) is a \$10 million investment in community-based housing which will alleviate the stress of many farmworker families who need safe and affordable places to call home. Not only will their housing be affordable but they will also have access to several services such as educational support and workforce development.

Environmental Justice

Farmworkers continue to lose income as a result of climate change through extreme heat, wildfires, and unhealthy air quality. Farmworkers are not able to afford their expenses such as the increasing rent prices and childcare. With a reinvestment of \$10 million to the Climate Change Fund ([HB 3124](#)), we are protecting the workers who face the most risks posed by the climate crisis. Farmworkers should not have to choose between their health and a paycheck.

Indigenous Language Justice

There are over 35,000 Oregonians who speak an Indigenous language as their primary language, but the current lack of Indigenous interpretation services too often leads to Indigenous Oregonians being denied life-saving care due to language barriers, an inability to access critical services, or imprisonment and deportation. Establishing the Indigenous Language Justice Fund ([SB 612-A](#)) will make investments needed to allow Indigenous language interpreters to provide life-saving

services to Oregonians who speak an original language from modern-day Mexico, Central, and South America.

Expanding Food Assistance

PCUN believes food is a human right and that everyone should have access to food no matter where we were born. However, too many are excluded from food assistance and security due to immigration status. [SB 610](#) would create a state-funded program that eliminates exclusions to SNAP and makes applying for assistance more welcoming, bringing stability to our communities and improving families' health and well-being.

Supporting A People's Budget

PCUN supports [The People's Budget](#) which lays out key investments to address the housing crisis, advance immigrant justice, fix Oregon's broken public defense system, make childcare accessible and affordable, address climate justice, and fund other urgent needs to strengthen Oregon's communities. The longer we ignore the challenges we face, the more it will cost to address them.

Our state's economic recovery is tenuous, and we need our state's leaders to invest in our future. While it is important that we maintain adequate reserves, we must also address the urgent needs of our communities. The good news is that Oregon's rainy day fund is large enough that we can do both.

Thank you for your time and consideration of our budget priorities. We urge your support.

Sincerely,

Liz Marquez Gutierrez
Policy Associate
PCUN