



May 4, 2023

To the Joint Committee on Ways and Means:

My name is Bridget Cooke, and I am the Executive Director and Co-Founder of Adelante Mujeres. I am writing today to urge you to pass Senate Bill 606, the Nonprofit Modernization Act.

Nonprofits promote the well-being of Oregonians every day, providing for basic needs like food and shelter, offering opportunities for education and economic advancement, supporting arts and culture, protecting our civil rights, and so much more.

Many of the bills being advocated for this legislative session are dependent on grants and contracts with the nonprofit sector. If we don't address the underlying issues facing the sector, including underinvestment and administrative burden, we are not setting up any of these programs for success. To deliver on these contracts, Oregon's nonprofits need more support from the State for workforce recruitment and retention.

Adelante Mujeres' mission is to provide holistic education and empowerment opportunities to marginalized Latina women and families to ensure full participation and active leadership in the community. We do this through Education, Entrepreneurship, and Leadership and Advocacy programs. We are also expanding to provide critical and culturally responsive mental health services to the Washington County Latine community.

To all of our disadvantage, nonprofits face a daunting barrier to fulfilling our essential role on behalf of the state. Nonprofits cannot exist without nonprofit employees, and nonprofit employees have an incredibly high rate of burnout and turnover.

As we expand to provide more services, Adelante Mujeres continues to recruit with the hopes of hiring more staff. This is also a result of our community growth and the ongoing need to promote more services across the county. However, it becomes increasingly difficult to recruit and hire at competitive wages with lack of investment and funding in the nonprofit sector. As a result of hiring delays, our current staff are stretched thin and some become inclined to find other employment opportunities.

Due in part to the current structure and requirements of state contracts, as well as low pay, heavy workload, understaffing, secondary trauma, and other stressors, nonprofit employees are leaving the sector to seek higher pay and better benefits elsewhere.

About 66% of our current funding come from state and federal government contracts. When we experience payment delays from these funds, we struggle to fulfill our own work, support our staff, and provide the critical services our community needs. Reforming contracting practices would highly benefit our entire organization and the community we serve.

The need to invest in the sector is now. Investment this year will improve our ability to recruit and retain staff into the future and for the pressing priorities that have been put forward by the Governor.

By supporting Oregon's nonprofits, you support the well-being of Oregonians. Please pass Senate Bill 606 and invest in the sector that you are so dependent upon for the state's success.

Thank you for your consideration,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bridget Cooke". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Bridget Cooke  
Executive Director & Co-Founder  
Adelante Mujeres