

# OREGON WORKING FAMILIES PARTY

## Testimony in support of HB 2966

TO: House Committee On Commerce and Consumer Protection

FROM: Annie Naranjo-Rivera, Oregon Working Families Party

Jan 29, 2025

Chair Sosa, Vice-Chairs Chaichi and Osborne, and Members of the House Committee on Commerce and Consumer Protection,

My name is Annie Naranjo-Rivera, and I am the State Director of the Oregon Working Families Party. Founded in 2006, the Oregon Working Families Party fights for an economy that works for all of us. I am writing to you today in support of **HB 2966**.

**HB 2966** creates a task force to look at public financing strategies, including options like a public bank, so that our communities can make taxpayers' money go further. During this time of unprecedented environmental and economic crises, we need to stretch our tax dollars further to address climate change along with the many needs of our state, and to restore economic stability. The Oregon Working Families Party has consistently advocated for public banks, which are vital institutions that keep taxpayer money in our economy so we can fund more projects that benefit our communities.

Many states are already working to create public banks to get more out of their limited budgets. With taxpayer funds currently held in big out-of-state for-profit banks, a major disruption in the US economy could pose serious risk to hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars, while Oregonians pay huge fees and interest to borrow from those same big banks for projects that benefit our communities. Creating public banks will help solve these problems and give Oregonians more control over our future.

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Public banks work with local community banks and credit unions to create a stronger economy by providing lending programs and lower-cost loans for homebuyers, small businesses, family farms, underserved populations, affordable housing programs, and low-cost student loans for Oregon students. They can also make loans and sell bonds for public infrastructure projects which often cost significantly more than what we could otherwise pay because of the huge fees and interest payments to big banks.

Public banks behave better because they operate for public benefit, not private profit. Big profit-driven banks not only take money out of the local economy to send to their executives and shareholders in the form of dividends and stock buy-backs. They have also been caught making fraudulent accounts, needlessly foreclosing on thousands of homeowners, and giving golden parachutes to misbehaving executives. In times of crisis, big banks have focused too much on ways to benefit from federal assistance programs and not enough on getting assistance loans to the people who needed them. By contrast, the public, state-owned Bank of North Dakota has the highest credit rating of any bank in the country (**A+ credit rating in 2023**), showing record profits, excellent return on investment, and has been very effective because public bank executives are focused on serving the public interest, as opposed to focusing on making as much money as possible for their executives and shareholders.

The creation of this task force is a critical first step in assessing how we can better invest in Oregon, putting our public dollars to work for the benefit of our communities here at home.

I urge you to vote yes on **HB 2966**.

Sincerely,

*Annie Naranjo-Rivera*  
*State Director*  
*Oregon Working Families Party*

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