

Date: February 21, 2025

To: Chair Hartman, Vice-Chairs Scharf and Nguyen, and Members of the Committee

From: Ted Cooper, AFT-Oregon Executive Vice-President

Re: Support for “Relating to services for assisting low-income individuals with tax navigation; declaring an emergency.- [HB-2991](#)”

Chair Hartman, Vice-Chairs Scharf and Nguyen, and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on HB-2991, which proposes a \$14 million investment to help working families navigate the complex federal and state tax system and be able to file their tax returns. AFT-Oregon represents over 18,000 education workers across Oregon. On behalf of our members, we strongly encourage your support of this bill.

This investment would expand tax preparation assistance programs, that have already helped thousands of Oregonians in need, to benefit more people, in particular in rural areas. Where available, these programs have brought much-needed relief to low-income Oregonians in the form of assistance navigating the filing process and claiming federal tax credits, but because program reach is currently limited due to resource constraints, approximately [\\$100 million](#) in federal Earned Income Tax Credits remain unclaimed by eligible Oregonians, in addition to many other tax credits.

The burden of navigating tax preparation falls on individuals in our country. In aggregate, this amounts to a barrier between those with the least resources and the tax credits they have a right to and crucially need to make ends meet. Direct File Oregon is a great step in the right direction, but as long as individuals have to file their own taxes, this barrier remains, and disproportionately affects our most vulnerable communities. Investing in the proven Tax Infrastructure Grant Program will support many more Oregonians to overcome that barrier, and likely result in far more than \$14 million in relief for Oregonians by leveraging existing credits. HB-2991 is an efficient way for our state to use public money to help as many Oregonians as much as possible, and we respectfully ask that you support it.

Signed,

Ted Cooper (he/him)

AFT-Oregon, Executive Vice-President

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