



*Testimony in support of HB 3193 (2025)*

Chair Grayber, Vice Chairs Elmer and Muñoz, and members of the Committee,

My name is Kate Suisman. I am an attorney at the Northwest Workers' Justice Project (NWJP). Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this important bill. We represent workers in low-wage jobs when bad things happen to them at work: when they are not paid, or are discriminated against for being in a protected class or are retaliated against for speaking up. Finally, we engage in policy advocacy and try to bring the important perspectives of workers in low-wage jobs and immigrant workers to these policy discussions.

I write in strong support of HB 3193, the Farmworker Disaster Relief Fund. NWJP was one of the organizations that got the first iteration of this program off the ground, and we have seen its positive impact in the community.

Many of our clients are farmworkers. Over the past five to ten years, we have received increasing numbers of calls from farmworkers asking about health and safety protections they may have, and if they have to work in dangerous conditions. This was especially pronounced with wildfires in and near the Gorge, the Willamette Valley and the Rogue Valley. Before we had heat and smoke rules in place, we had limited advice we could give farmworkers about what they could request to protect themselves at work. We do have strong heat and smoke rules now, but sometimes conditions are just too dangerous to work in. In these situations, farmworkers lose needed income and families suffer. While some farmworkers qualify for unemployment insurance, some do not, like the large majority of H2A workers and undocumented workers. Yet these two categories of workers make up a large portion of the overall farmworker workforce, and they should have options during our state's increasing number of climate emergencies.

This bill sets up a regular source of funding for an effective program that has helped thousands of Oregonians to date. It is limited to "drought, wildfire, earthquake, hurricane, flood, excessive heat, tornado, winter storm, snowstorm, freeze, hail, smoke, tsunami, volcanic eruption or other adverse weather event," as well as pandemics and declared states of emergency. Many workers can work from home when weather permits us from getting to work, and many have the privilege to be salaried workers who will likely receive the same pay if we miss a day or two of work. But most farmworkers clearly do not have these privileges. Please pass HB 3193 to level the playing field for the workers who put food on our table and who make Oregon a strong agricultural leader.

Thank you.