



March 10, 2025

Dear Chair Grayber, Vice-Chair Elmer, Vice-Chair Muñoz, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Rev. Ron Werner, Jr, I live in NE Portland and I am writing in strong support of HB 3193, the Farmworker Disaster Relief Fund. I submit testimony today in my capacity as co-director of Together Lab, a multifaith, multiracial, and multigenerational statewide organization that builds community power to transform systems that exploit people and planet. Through relational organizing, collaborative partnerships, and incubating new initiatives, we grow communities of care that act for justice to cultivate an Oregon where all belong.

For us, *belonging* is not just a feeling word. It's structural. It's about who has agency to co-create the systems we need to ensure everyone has a meaningful voice and that their well-being is considered. As we navigate increased wildfires, polar vortexes, and 'smoke season,' as our leaders in Central Oregon call it, this means ensuring everyone has access to what they need to thrive regardless of their job and how much money they make.

As a person of faith and minister in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, my values lead me to ask, *whose voices are calling out from the wilderness? Who is not being heard?* The Farmworker Disaster Relief Fund is an answer to those calling from the fields— our loved ones and neighbors, who play an essential role in our food systems and integral role in our communities.

HB 3193 will provide temporary financial relief to farmworkers in Oregon who lose work or wages due to extreme weather conditions. HB 3193 will define a "qualifying disaster" in regards to extreme weather as more than just extreme heat and smoke. This includes snow storms, ice storms, heavy raining, flooding, pandemics, etc. Conditions in which our farmworkers have continued working in despite the dangerous impacts to them physically and mentally.

With help from the Oregon state legislature, we can meet this moment, ensuring the vitality of our farmworkers— not just for future labor, but so they can live healthy lives as parents, neighbors, and friends.

Respectfully Submitted,

Rev. Ron Werner, Jr
Co-Director, Together Lab