



Oregon Law Center

WORKING TOGETHER TO ACHIEVE JUSTICE FOR LOW INCOME OREGONIANS

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To: Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Public Safety
From: Julie Samples, Oregon Law Center
Re: Support for HB 5005-1
Date: April 3, 2025

Co-Chair Broadman, Co-Chair Evans, and members of the Ways and Means Subcommittee on Public Safety,

For the record, my name is Julie Samples, and I am a Managing Attorney with the Oregon Law Center.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in strong support of HB 5005, particularly the –1 amendment filed on 2/13/2025.

The Illegal Marijuana Market Enforcement Grant Program, which I will refer to as the Grant Program for ease, is a critical initiative that assists local communities in addressing the impacts of illegal cannabis operations, including violent crime and labor trafficking.

At the Oregon Law Center, we serve agricultural workers across the state by offering free legal support, connecting workers to vital resources, and advocating for their rights. The Oregon Law Center is part of the Cannabis Worker Resilience Partnership, or CWRP, a collaboration of seven community-based organizations, legal partners, and a mental health provider aimed at providing comprehensive services to cannabis workers, as well as community prevention outreach and education. This partnership is funded through the Grant Program and has been a crucial and holistic program ensuring that workers affected by illegal cannabis operations can pursue justice.

Illegal cannabis operations continue to impact communities across Oregon. While largely concentrated in Southern Oregon, these operations have also been observed in other areas. For example, the CWRP has clients from at least nine different counties in Oregon. We were pleased that in 2021 and 2022, the legislature specifically highlighted the need to fund community-based organizations to provide a humanitarian response to this crisis.

The Cannabis Workers Resilience Partnership (CWRP) is a statewide, innovative response to the humanitarian crisis within the illegal cannabis industry. We provide wraparound services to workers who have endured trauma and abuse at these sites, including legal services support, direct humanitarian funds to help them stay housed

The Oregon Law Center's mission is to achieve justice for low-income communities in Oregon by providing a full range of the highest quality civil legal services.



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and have access to food, and mental health support. We have previously described the living and working conditions of many of these workers and I won't repeat those here. Since its inception, and because of the support of the Grant Program, we have provided direct support (whether legal, humanitarian or mental health services) to over 1200 workers, legal advice to over 500 workers, filed over 50 legal actions to hold bad actors accountable, recovered over \$310,000 in unpaid wages, provided innovative outreach messages through a strategic campaign, and are in on-going conversations with several agencies (such as BOLI, Oregon OSHA, ODA, OLCC), law enforcement personnel, and others.

We strongly support funding for the Grant Program for both law enforcement and to support for the work of community based and legal organizations. Thank you for your time and consideration. I urge your support HB 5005 and any amendments for additional funding (such as the -1 amendment that proposes \$9.4 million to law enforcement and \$1.7 million for humanitarian support) to ensure that communities and workers affected by illegal cannabis operations receive the assistance they need.

Sincerely,
Julie Samples
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