

Testimony to House Revenue Committee on HB 2940 and HB 2077

Chair Barnhart, Vice Chair Pederson, Vice Chair Bentz, and members of the committee. My name is John Calhoun and I am a resident of Portland. I am here today on behalf of the Oregon Center for Christian Voices (OCCV).

OCCV is a faith-based non-profit seeking to activate Christians on issues of economic and social justice. We believe Scripture is clear that God's intended role for government is to assure that poor and marginalized people are cared for and that all individuals have the opportunity to flourish.

We believe a budget is a moral document and that our state budget reflects who and what is important and who and what is not. We support HB 2940 and HB 2077 so that the legislature will have the tools to properly weigh tax incentives for large corporations against the needs for education, broad based infrastructure investments and care for the indigent or disadvantaged in our society.

Typically tax breaks are provided with good intentions at the time they are granted to incentivize specific economic activity. Sometimes those tax breaks continue long after the time when they can be justified and sometimes the promises made at the time are simply not met. Sometimes corporations find ways to avoid paying any taxes in ways not intended by this legislature.

Tax expenditures need to be fully weighed by the legislature against other pressing needs.

- Oregon is above the national average in child hunger and nearly half the people assisted by food stamps are 18 or younger.
- Right now Oregon cannot fund a full school year and reasonable class sizes for our students.
- Rising college tuition is preventing some of our citizens from attending university and reaching their full potential.
- Law enforcement in some parts of the state is practically non-existent.
- Families with children too often live in cars or other unsafe conditions because they can't afford an apartment.

HB2940 and HB2077 will not solve our budgetary problems. However, they are a necessary step to ensure that the legislature and the public understand what the tradeoffs are. During a period of great and growing income and wealth disparity we need to bring light to the debate over who is benefiting from advantageous tax breaks and who is being hurt.

As an Oregonian and member of the faith community who cares about protecting vulnerable kids, families, and seniors, I encourage you to support these bills.