

**Testimony on SB 1 to Senate Finance and Revenue Committee**  
**March 9, 2017**

My name is Frank Mele and I live in Silverton Oregon.

For four years I had the privilege of working as the director at St. Joseph Shelter in Mt. Angel. The Shelter is sponsored by the Benedictine Sisters who have served the rural Oregon community for over 130 years. I refer to the nuns as the gutsiest group I have ever met. In 1987, with virtually no financial resources, they began their mission of service to farmworkers, first by a soup kitchen and eventually with the foundation of St. Joseph Shelter. From its inception, the Shelter was plagued with the “no money, no mission” syndrome.

Developing a funding base was most difficult. The Sisters already had other ministries for which they were asking support. Much of that support came from former students of their high schools and college and the local residents of Mt. Angel. However, the people they served rarely came from the local community. The development of a strong local support base got lost in the competition of the nuns’ other worthy causes.

Unfortunately this story in Mt. Angel is often repeated throughout the rural areas of our state. This tax credit will provide funding source for operations, making it easier for organizations like St. Joseph’s Shelter to focus on the mission of providing housing and services to its farmworker families. Rather than just doing good, the shelters will be able to better work. In this instance, the first customer is the agricultural worker. The second customers are the small rural farmers who do not have the ability to provide housing for their workers.

I urge your support of SB 1.

Thank you.



Frank Mele