

Dear Governor Brown, President Courtney, and Speaker Kotek,

As our elected leaders, we have seen you rise to the occasion to protect Oregon's communities, tackling issues like climate change, health care affordability, and the housing crisis. We trust in your ability to act decisively as we face a new and powerful threat in COVID-19. We are highly grateful for and encouraged by the goals of the newly created [Joint Committee for Coronavirus Response](#).

We write this letter to extend our wholehearted support and cooperation in these times, to ensure we are collectively doing everything we can to help Oregonians ride out the difficult financial uncertainty that these next few weeks of social isolation and economic stagnation will bring.

Before the COVID-19 outbreak, many Oregonians were already living on the financial edge, struggling to make ends meet. Just two days of lost wages can result in food insecurity; a week's worth of lost work can result in an inability to pay the following month's rent.

For our flourishing industries of service and gig workers, creative freelancers, self-employed contractors, and small business owners, a downturn in business will send shockwaves through multiple sectors that will be difficult to recover from. As we take every necessary precaution to staunch the spread of the COVID-19 virus, we must ensure we do not create a larger, more daunting threat: financial ruin and widespread homelessness for Oregonians.

We must ensure that those who will be most impacted by this pandemic are being heard and supported in this time of great uncertainty. We are especially concerned about the well-being of Black, Indigenous, and people of color; and women, who are often the primary caregivers at home as well as on the frontlines. As community organizations and labor unions, we are hard at work finding solutions for all of our members, within our purview. But we need your help to protect families across the state from the worst-case scenario.

Here are our proposals to create a safety net for Oregonians from the COVID-19 epidemic:

Housing Supports

- + Pass an emergency rent forgiveness order for all workers whose income stream is impacted by COVID-19 through September 2020, and reassess monthly as the situation evolves
- + Place a temporary stoppage on evictions resulting from the COVID-19 epidemic through September 2020 (and reassess monthly thereafter) and

implement stringent emergency rent controls for all units, [as the City of Portland has done](#).

- + Provide financial support for non-profit housing providers who rely on rent payments, to ensure their critical services remain in operation
- + Infuse state resources for temporary housing, especially housing to protect unsheltered individuals or those living in shelters (ORS 401.185)
- + Create a mortgage relief fund for families earning below Oregon's [self-sufficiency threshold](#) to receive financial assistance through September 2020, and reassess monthly thereafter
- + [Advocate](#) that lenders and banks freeze mortgage payments for families earning below Oregon's self-sufficiency threshold
- + Establish a statewide moratorium on utility shut offs and late fees. The big utilities in the urban parts of the state have said they won't charge late fees or disconnect. We must extend this benefit statewide, similar to the [severe weather moratorium](#) on residential gas or electric shut offs.

Food, Transportation and Healthcare Access

- + Provide increased access to food vouchers to be made available at DMV locations, food banks and schools
- + Provide financial support for transit systems to provide [free transit](#) for workers who must continue to commute
- + Ask the federal government to grant an open enrollment period on the healthcare exchange marketplace to ensure that Oregonians who are ineligible for OHP and are uninsured can sign up for health insurance in light of the pandemic
- + Waive any fees or copayments related to testing for COVID-19 [as was done in New York State](#) and provide financial support for any uninsured individuals who must seek medical care if they contract the virus

Support for Incarcerated Individuals

- + [Similar to actions taken in other states](#), release people being held for non-violent offenses and those awaiting trial to reduce exposure for people in custody and those working in these facilities
- + Forgive current court fines/fees debt and halt all driver license suspensions due to non-payment of court fines/fees
- + Suspend in-person check-ins for individuals on probation or parole and arrange Skype or Zoom meetings to meet guidelines under ORS 137.520 et seq.

Support for BIPOC, Immigrants and Refugees

- + Ensure that all state responses are distributed equitably and are accessible to underserved communities, including Black, Indigenous, and other people of color, people with disabilities, elders, rural communities and others.

- + Ensure that healthcare facilities and testing sites are sited to reach underserved communities, with access to safe transportation provided
- + Ensure all information is translated and interpreters are provided where needed
- + Insist that ICE offices move to phone check-ins for asylum-seekers and immigrants, or [if ICE offices remain closed](#), that asylum-seekers and immigrants suffer no adverse consequences during the closure.

Worker Protections and Supports

- + Ensure the voices of all workers are heard, by including nonprofit, and especially Black, Indigenous, and people of color-led organizations when convening discussions with business leaders about economic relief and financial support for businesses
- + Provide financial support to nonprofits that are working on the front lines to share information and resources, and combat the economic impacts of the virus in our communities
- + Extend Unemployment Insurance (UI) benefits under ORS 657 to workers who are quarantined and lack paid sick leave or have insufficient paid sick time to cover the quarantine period.
- + Reinstate Unemployment Insurance benefit rights to cover workers who have been previously ineligible from receiving this benefit
- + Waive work search requirements during the emergency. Clarify that “good cause” to quit a job includes being forced to perform duties that jeopardize workers’ health, and needing to leave a job in order to care for family.
- + Allow UI for workers who are still employed but unable to work due to a temporary business closure
- + Reimburse the one-week waiting period for UI benefit
- + Extend Oregon Family Leave Act (OFLA) protections under ORS 659a.150 et seq. to all workers regardless of employer size, hours worked, job tenure or part-time or seasonal work status. Relax OFLA medical verification requirements and allow a person to take OFLA without medical verification to self-quarantine.
- + Expand Oregon’s Paid Sick Time protections under ORS 653.601 et seq. by lifting the local preemption, covering all workers with paid leave regardless of employer size, waiving documentation requirements to prove illness, allowing workers to borrow from future sick time if they haven't reached the 90 day threshold or if they have used up their sick time and providing 14 days of paid leave during public health emergencies
- + Ensure automatic approval for a Workers’ Compensation claim under ORS 656 if there is a documented case of COVID-19 at a worker’s place of employment. Ensure Workers’ Compensation benefits at a worker’s gross weekly wage and not at the two-thirds time loss rate.
- + Amend Oregon’s TANF program to encourage appropriate responses to the crisis: Suspend mandatory work requirements and end sanctions or time limits during the emergency. Drop the requirement for a face-to-face

interview for applications and recertifications. Increase TANF grant amount to families.

- + Create a special fund for workers who are misclassified as independent contractors in need of income replacement and benefit assistance. These workers likely lack protections like unemployment insurance, paid sick leave, OFLA/FMLA leave, employer-paid health insurance and other benefits.
- + Offer workers who are properly classified as independent contractors access to these same benefits.

Family and Community Supports

- + Maintain the availability of child care. When childcare providers are small business owners, we must protect their sustainability and create additional capacity when their services are most needed.
- + Grant emergency child care assistance to all parents and caregivers who are required to work during the COVID-19 outbreak
- + Provide child care vouchers to parents who must continue to work while children are kept home from school. Support the financial stability of child care providers by adjusting subsidy policies so as not to cause financial harm.
- + Invest in a worker-and-family-supports hotline and centralized website giving people real-time answers and information, in a variety of languages, about their rights under existing law and about programs they may qualify for (including health care, rental assistance, child care assistance, food assistance, etc)

Signed (*as of 3/18/2020 at 8am*)

Asian Pacific American Network of
Oregon (APANO)
Basic Rights Oregon
Capaces Leadership Institute
Causa
Community Alliance of Tenants
Fair Shot For All
Family Forward Oregon
Latinos Unidos Siempre
Momentum Alliance
MRG Foundation
NAACP Eugene-Springfield
Nonprofit Association of Oregon
Northwest Workers' Justice Project
Oregon Public Health Association
Oregon AFSCME Council 75

Oregon Education Association
Oregon League of Conservation Voters
Oregon State Building and Construction
Trades Council
PCUN
Planned Parenthood Advocates of
Oregon
Portland African American Leadership
Forum (PAALF)
Rogue Action Center
Rogue Climate
Rural Organizing Project
SEIU 503
Southern Oregon Climate Action Now
Unite Oregon
Urban League



THE NONPROFIT ASSOCIATION OF OREGON



Oregon Public Health Association



RURAL ORGANIZING PROJECT



Urban League of Portland