



March 18, 2020

Co-Chair Senator Arnie Roblan
Co-Chair Representative Paul Holvey
Committee Members
Joint Special Committee on Coronavirus Response

RE: COVID-19 Response

Dear Co-Chair Roblan, Co-Chair Holvey and Committee Members:

The Oregon State Building & Construction Trades Council (OSBCTC) is an umbrella organization representing tens of thousands of skilled trade union members in 27 affiliated unions. These union trades workers are a fundamental part of Oregon's workforce, our state's economy and all workers future economic success. As the State Legislature considers legislation that will assist working families and individuals during this crisis, we wanted to share labor's perspective and stand united with our communities and unions.

As this pandemic continues to hit our communities, there is no doubt that our members' households will be severely impacted. We know that many workers in Oregon live paycheck to paycheck, and for many of these families, the economic impacts of being unemployed during this pandemic is at the top of their mind. We should not allow Oregon's union trades workers to fall behind on their bills because they were not allowed to work in the face of this crisis. That is why it is vital that we ensure that the building and construction industry is declared as an essential service/business.

Under Oregon law, some of the workers laid off would be ineligible for unemployment insurance (UI) benefits, since they must be able to work, and must be actively seeking another job. Because most places of gainful employment closed, the reality of finding another hourly wage position is dismal. OSBCTC believes that all workers should have access to UI benefits during this unprecedented crisis: if they are mildly or severely ill with COVID-19, if schools are closed due to COVID-19 and workers have no access to childcare, if they are immune-compromised, or if they want to socially-distance.

Because these changes are substantial, we believe the legislature should consider creating a special UI benefits category to be used now and in the future during declared states of emergency. Employers who are closing by the recommendation of the Governor should have the ability to apply for UI

benefits for their entire workforce to alleviate the administrative burden on the state, and to allow for seamless transition for workers.

Because we do not know how long this pandemic will have hold of our communities, we also believe that the legislature should consider infrastructure investment to keep people working, as well as temporarily expanding the states prevailing wage requirements. Prevailing wage requirements ensure that our members and their families receive full family health benefits and do not add to the financial burden to Oregon. We owe it to all hard-working Oregonians across the state to ensure that they have the resources that they need to keep their families safe and healthy through this crisis.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert Camarillo", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Robert Camarillo