

Hi,

My name is Owen Christofferson and I live in Northeast Portland. I'm writing in support of the Oregon Worker Relief Fund proposed by PCUN and other advocacy groups.

As a full time Transportation Network Company (Uber and Lyft) driver, my earnings have all but vanished after the onset of the coronavirus crisis. Work has dried up and I am now in a very precarious situation with no sick pay or unemployment available to me. I am not alone. Thousands of people in Portland work as TNC drivers, and many more work as independent contractors in other sectors. We drive people around, deliver food and packages, and perform other work on the frontlines of this public health crisis.

The Oregon Legislature must pass and implement a worker relief fund that includes protections for the most vulnerable workers including independent contractors, undocumented workers, and others. Please consider the independent contractor classified workers who are on the frontlines of this crisis working with extreme precarity and little to no protections.

Thank you,

Owen Christofferson

Oregon Worker Relief Fund

March 22st, 2020

Overview

As COVID-19 continues to affect low-wage employees, we continue to see a high level of unemployment for the communities we serve. Many gainfully employed Oregonians who are immigrants (and contribute to our collective prosperity) have lost their jobs--and thus their wages--because of the pandemic and have no access to any wage replacement program such as the federal Unemployment Insurance program. This has immediate harsh impacts such as housing and food insecurity and long-term impacts for these immigrant families. We understand that the committee is currently developing a policy approach for COVID-19. We want to ensure workers who are ineligible for UI benefits are included.

We solve this problem by creating a rapid community-based grant system. The OWRF program emulates a wage replacement program. We ask our state government to set up an emergency fund for non-profit organizations of the state who serve restaurant workers, care-givers, immigrants, refugees, day laborers, farmworkers, and people of color, all of whom contribute to the collectively prosperity of Oregon and will be disproportionately impacted by the wage loss caused by COVID-19.

Proposal Goals/ Request

1. **Provide financial relief to Oregonians that cannot access public benefits:** Many Oregonian immigrants fall under classifications that make them ineligible for unemployment insurance (UI). For instance, many Oregonians operate as independent contractors or are ineligible for public benefits due to their immigration classification. The Oregon Worker Relief Fund would provide temporary financial support for those that are falling through the crack during our current pandemic.
2. **Allocate funds for Community-Based Organizations (CBO) to distribute:** Oregonians often face difficulty accessing public benefits. More recently, our immigrant community

faces fear of any government interaction due to increased immigration enforcement and public charge rules. State non-profit organizations, with the support of the state and a lead non-profit entity, will create an equitable alternative system of financial relief as a temporary measure to combat COVID-19's effect on our workforce.