

Item 4: Department of Administrative Services

Oregon Worker Relief Fund

Analyst: Paul Siebert

Request: Allocate \$10,000,000 from the Emergency Fund to the Department of Administrative Services for a grant to the Oregon Community Foundation to oversee a culturally-specific community based grant program to make payments to workers who are ineligible for wage replacement payments from traditional unemployment insurance programs.

Description: One of the areas of need identified by the Joint Special Committee on Coronavirus Response was support for those unable to qualify for unemployment benefits due to immigration status (Proposal #27). In response to this identified need, a \$10 million General Fund allocation is recommended to be made to the Department of Administrative Services (DAS) for a grant to the Oregon Community Foundation to oversee establishment of a rapid community-based grant program to distribute wage replacement payments to eligible immigrant Oregonians. The program would provide direct services to individuals that qualify. Applicants would be prioritized using the following criteria:

1. Applicants must live in Oregon;
2. Applicants lost their job in Oregon due to the pandemic; and
3. Applicants are not eligible for federal Unemployment Insurance or other temporary wage-replacement programs.

The program operator will have to create an online application system that is user friendly and will only be used by Community Based Organizations (CBOs), not applicants. A checklist for intake will be provided to CBOs. The program will provide for secure intake of information provided by applicants and retain applicant information securely for a limited time. CBOs will use existing channels to identify potentially eligible individuals for the program. CBO staff will navigate applicants through the application process. The program operator will screen all incoming applications and any questions or decisions will be communicated through the lead CBO, not directly with the applicant. Payments would be made to the recipient of the funds by their preferred payment method and must be made within 21 days of the final approval of an application. The program will be designed to replace lost wages created by the COVID-19 pandemic up to a maximum of \$590 per week. The entity overseeing the program and participating CBOs must report back to the state through DAS on the impact of the program and provide de-identified survey results to better assess the impact COVID-19 has in the community. The wage replacement program may use no more than 10% of the \$10 million of state funds being provided for expenses related to operating the wage replacement program.

Recommendation: The Co-Chairs of the Emergency Board recommend approval of an allocation of \$10,000,000 from the Emergency Fund to the Department of Administrative Services for a grant to the Oregon Community Foundation to oversee a culturally-specific community based grant program to make payments to workers who are ineligible for wage replacement payments from traditional unemployment insurance programs.