

Item 2: Department of Administrative Services

Oregon Worker Relief Fund

Analyst: Paul Siebert

Request: Increase the Federal Funds expenditure limitation established for the Department of Administrative Services for funding made available to states through the Coronavirus Relief Fund by \$10,000,000 for a second grant to the Oregon Community Foundation which is overseeing a culturally-specific community-based grant program making 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, the Emergency Board at the April 23, 2020 meeting allocated \$10,000,000 from the Emergency Fund to the Department of Administrative Services (DAS) for a grant to the Oregon Community Foundation (OCF) to oversee establishment of a rapid community-based grant program to distribute wage replacement payments to eligible immigrant Oregonians (Item #4). The Worker Relief Fund provides direct services to individuals that qualify. Applicants are being 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.

A second grant of \$10,000,000 using funding made available to the state through the Coronavirus Relief Fund (CRF) is being proposed to award OCF additional funding to support workers who are ineligible for wage replacement payments from traditional unemployment insurance programs through the Worker Relief Fund. Wage replacement programs are an allowable use of CRF funding. In line with the first grant, OCF and participating organizations 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 of COVID-19 in served communities.

One of the actions being considered to help balance the state budget for 2019-21 is shifting eligible expenditures approved for funding during the April 23, 2020 meeting of the Emergency Board, including the \$10,000,000 approved for the Worker Relief Fund, to Federal Funds from the CRF.

Recommendation: The Co-Chairs of the Emergency Board recommend increasing the Federal Funds expenditure limitation established for the Department of Administrative Services for funding made available to states through the Coronavirus Relief Fund by \$10,000,000 for a second grant to the Oregon Community Foundation which is overseeing a culturally-specific community-based grant program making payments to workers who are ineligible for wage replacement payments from traditional unemployment insurance programs.