

Item 15: Department of Administrative Services/Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board/Oregon Health Authority
Federal Coronavirus Relief Fund for Agricultural Worker Protections

Analyst: Paul Siebert

Request: Increase the Federal Funds expenditure limitation established for the Department of Administrative Services (DAS) for funding made available to states through the Coronavirus Relief Fund by \$30,000,000; establish an Other Funds expenditure limitation of \$16,000,000 for the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) for funding from the Coronavirus Relief Fund received by DAS and transferred to OWEB; authorize the establishment of 7 positions (1.75 FTE) in OWEB to reimburse agricultural growers' costs associated with providing protective measures for agricultural workers; and establish an Other Funds expenditure limitation of \$3,000,000 for the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) for funding from the Coronavirus Relief Fund received by DAS and transferred to OHA for community outreach activities.

Description: On March 27, 2020, the federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act became law. One of the many funding components the CARES Act contains is a \$150 billion Coronavirus Relief Fund (CRF). Through the CRF, the CARES Act provides for payments to State, Local, and Tribal governments to pay costs associated with the impact of COVID-19.

The CARES Act requires that payments from the CRF can only be used to cover expenses that meet all of the following conditions:

- (1) Are necessary expenditures incurred due to the COVID-19 public health emergency
- (2) Were not accounted for in the budget most recently approved as of March 27, 2020 (the date of enactment of the CARES Act) for the state or local government
- (3) Were incurred during the period between March 1, 2020 and December 30, 2020.

The Department of Administrative Services (DAS) is the Oregon recipient agency for the Federal Funds from the CRF, which the Department is then expending as Federal Funds. The \$30,000,000 Federal Funds expenditure limitation increase will allow expenditure of CRF monies for agricultural worker protection activities. Of this amount, \$10,000,000 will be used by DAS to provide a grant to the Oregon Community Foundation for a Worker Relief Quarantine Fund to assist recovering agricultural workers. In addition, \$1,000,000 will be used to distribute state purchased personal protective equipment directly to agricultural workers.

The remaining \$19,000,000 of the Federal Funds expenditure limitation increase for DAS will be used to send CRF monies to other state agencies for agricultural worker protection activities. Due to grant restrictions, if other state agencies are involved in the expenditure of CRF funds, DAS will send the funds to the receiving agencies using Federal Funds expenditure limitation, while the receiving agencies will then expend those CRF monies as Other Funds.

The Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) will operate a program to use CRF funding to reimburse agricultural growers' costs associated with taking measures to mitigate dangers agricultural workers face from COVID-19 and comply with new emergency OSHA regulations. This will be a joint effort between OWEB, Oregon Housing and Community Services (OHCS), and Oregon

Department of Agriculture (ODA). OHCS and ODA will develop a detailed policy framework, including eligible uses and reimbursement rates, and support with communications and outreach to growers and housing advocates. OWEB will administer all reimbursements for housing costs, field sanitation assistance, and transportation costs. OWEB will establish seven positions (1.75 FTE) supported with CRF funding received from DAS through December 30, 2020. These positions will be solely dedicated to COVID-19 response activities; no reimbursement payment can be made after December 30, 2020.

The \$16,000,000 of CRF funding administered by OWEB will be used as follows:

- \$10,000,000 for housing alternatives to address OSHA's temporary rules limiting the number of beds for Oregon's agricultural workers and enhancing sanitation efforts to protect agricultural workers. Housing funds would allow for full or partial reimbursement to growers for hotel/motel beds to provide housing for migrant agricultural workers who would have had on-farm housing but are displaced due to reduced capacity. Housing funds will also be used for on-site alternative housing that will be provided to agricultural workers on site but is not a part of the existing housing stock that has been reduced
- \$5,000,000 for sanitation efforts that would include the rapid deployment of handwashing stations, other sanitation equipment, additional portable restrooms for field sanitation, and cleaning supplies
- \$1,000,000 for partial or full reimbursement of additional transportation costs associated with recent OSHA regulations that have reduced the number of agricultural workers who can ride in grower-provided transportation.

Finally, the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) will use \$3,000,000 Other Funds expenditure limitation for community-based outreach and prevention grants to community organizations serving migrant seasonal agricultural workers to conduct field education, outreach, engagement, and educational activities to agricultural farm owners, growers, workers, and their families.

Recommendation: The Co-Chairs of the Emergency Board recommend increasing the Federal Funds expenditure limitation established for the Department of Administrative Services (DAS) for funding made available to states through the Coronavirus Relief Fund by \$30,000,000; establishing an Other Funds expenditure limitation of \$16,000,000 for the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) for funding from the Coronavirus Relief Fund received by the Department of Administrative Services and transferred to OWEB; authorizing the establishment of 7 positions (1.75 FTE) in OWEB to reimburse agricultural growers' costs associated with providing protective measures for agricultural workers; and establishing an Other Funds expenditure limitation of \$3,000,000 for the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) for funding from the Coronavirus Relief Fund received by DAS and transferred to OHA for community outreach activities.