

Item 4: Department of Administrative Services

Oregon Worker Relief Fund

Analyst: Paul Siebert

Request: Establish a \$20,000,000 Federal Funds expenditure limitation for the Department of Administrative Services from funding made available to states through the Coronavirus Relief Fund for a third grant to the Oregon Community Foundation for the culturally-specific community-based grant program Oregon Worker Relief Fund, to make additional payments to workers who are ineligible for wage replacement payments from traditional unemployment insurance programs and transfer \$20,000,000 Federal Funds expenditure limitation from the expenditure limitation established by the Emergency Board at the April 23, 2020 meeting (Item #8) to the newly established Federal Funds expenditure limitation.

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. In response to this identified need, the Emergency Board first allocated \$10,000,000 from the Emergency Fund to the Department of Administrative Services (DAS) at its April 23, 2020 meeting 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. This was followed with a subsequent award of \$10,000,000 using monies from the Coronavirus Relief Fund (CRF) to OCF at the June 5, 2020 meeting of the Emergency Board to increase program capacity.

The Worker Relief Fund provides direct services to individuals that qualify. Applicants are 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 Oregon Community Foundation reports that its community partners have distributed all of the previously provided funding as of September 30, 2020. OCF was able to provide benefits to 13,882 individuals with average payments of \$1,641 each. OCF indicated that the average wait time from submission of an application to grant award was under 10 days and that around 35% of payments have been made to individuals living outside the Portland metropolitan area. The Foundation also stated it is confident it can disburse an additional \$20,000,000 in awards before the December 30, 2020 federal deadline if this item is approved and the existing grant agreement with DAS can be amended and the money disbursed quickly.

A third grant of \$20,000,000 using funding made available to the state through the Coronavirus Relief Fund is being proposed to award OCF additional funding to support workers through the Oregon Worker Relief Fund who are ineligible for wage replacement payments from traditional unemployment insurance programs. Wage replacement programs are an allowable use of CRF funding.

The Department of Administrative Services will transfer Federal Funds expenditure limitation previously provided for purchase of personal protective equipment (PPE) to a new expenditure

limitation to accommodate the additional CRF grant to the Oregon Community Foundation. Excess Federal Funds expenditure limitation is now available due to the state receipt of \$75.0 million in funding from the Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA) as reimbursement for the purchase of PPE. This FEMA reimbursement makes the original CRF monies available for eligible CRF uses (see Item #3 on the agenda).

Recommendation: The Co-Chairs of the Emergency Board recommend establishing a \$20,000,000 Federal Funds expenditure limitation for the Department of Administrative Services from funding made available to states through the Coronavirus Relief Fund for a third grant to the Oregon Community Foundation for the culturally-specific community-based grant program Oregon Worker Relief Fund and transfer \$20,000,000 Federal Funds expenditure limitation from the expenditure limitation established by the Emergency Board at the April 23, 2020 meeting (Item #8) to the newly established Federal Funds expenditure limitation.