

Thank you Co-Chairs and members of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means,

For the record, my name is Blake Helm and I live in Springfield, Oregon. I work at the Oregon Department of State Lands and am represented by AFSCME Local 2238, where I am the local president.

I'm here to give voice to the many coworkers at my agency that have gone to work everyday and are still doing it, to make sure that the State can continue to provide meaningful services to the residents of Oregon.

As you well know the American Rescue Plan has set up Oregon to receive a lot of federal money over the next few years. Instead of saving this money for a future rainy day, the state should make every effort to help rebuild the economy by spending this money now.

One way to rebuild with this money is to prioritize essential workers – workers that are often the least well compensated workers. Direct payments to this sector of Oregon's workforce would roll right back into the economy.

That's why I'm here today to ask you to prioritize essential workers in the state's budget. By doing this, you will show support for the workers that helped Oregon get through this pandemic in better shape than many other states.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify and for your commitment to our state's essential workers.