

Juan Ramirez Hernandez  
Woodburn, Oregon  
4/22/2021

Attn: Co-Chairs Johnson, Steiner-Hayward, and Rayfield; Vice Co-Chairs Girod, Gomberg, and Smith; and members of Oregon's Joint Committee on Ways & Means

I am writing to you today in response to your calls for equity-based policies. As members of Oregon's Ways & Means Committee, I am calling on you to support HB 2358, HB 2819, and continued investment in the Oregon Worker Relief Fund. These are all priority items in *The People's Budget*.

The Oregon Worker Relief Fund provides financial support directly to Oregonians who have lost their jobs yet are ineligible for Unemployment Insurance and federal stimulus relief due to their immigration status, and now face hunger, homelessness, and economic hardship. Fully funding the Oregon Worker Relief Fund would give direct support to workers who need access to a financial safety net now.

We also ask you to support HB 2819 because all workers no matter their place of origin should be able to earn enough to care for their families.

- HB 2819 allows all income-eligible workers in Oregon to claim the state's EITC, regardless of how they file their taxes.
- HB 2819 means that 90,000 U.S. citizens living in mixed-status households in Oregon (mostly children) will benefit from the EITC.
- This bill has the potential to impact over 34,000 Oregon families—predominantly Latinx and Asian Americans—who file their taxes using an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN).

These priorities matter to me personally because I myself and many families can benefit from having access to funds. I have been in Oregon since 1997. I have been paying taxes for many years. Before I worked as a painter, but now I have not been working. About fifteen days ago I was in the hospital getting operated on. Before I spent time in the hospital because I was sick. I was in the same hospital room as someone who was positive for Covid-19. I luckily did not contract Covid, but I had to quarantine for 15 days, so I lost many days of work.

Before I also worked as a farmworker. Farmworkers are extremely underpaid. I didn't earn enough money to live. I use an ITIN number to file my taxes. I do not have access to the earned income tax credit. If I did have access, it would help me a lot with my bills, rent, food, clothes, and insurance. In Oregon we have to drive everywhere. Everything is too far to walk to. I have to spend a lot of money on my car insurance and gas. I am grateful for any type of funds I could receive.

I believe that Oregon's economic recovery should help those who were hurt most by COVID-19 and our corresponding recession: primarily Oregonians who identify as Black, Indigenous, and/or people of color, women; immigrants; and/or LGBTQ+. Investments that are rooted in racial, gender, and economic justice are what this moment calls for. Now is not the time for Oregon to save money or cut budgets.

By prioritizing the policies included in The People's Budget, you will build an equity-based budget that ensures Oregon emerges stronger than before and is ready to weather future storms. Thank you for your time and the opportunity to give feedback.

Sincerely,  
Juan Ramirez Hernandez