

TESTIMONY SUBMITTED IN SUPPORT OF HB 2819 AS ORIGINALLY DRAFTED (Edited Version)

I am a retired attorney volunteering with the Consolidated Oregon Indivisible Network and serve on the legislative committee. I spent 25 years as a public defender and, since retiring, I have represented immigrant clients seeking asylum and fighting deportation. As a member of COIN Legislative Committee and a member of the immigration committee of Act for Democracy, I have been tracking pending legislation that affects Oregon's immigrant communities.

The Earned Income Tax Credit is very important for low-income working families. It boosts workers' economic security by raising their take-home pay and has been shown to have many economic and social benefits for recipients and their families. It is an effective tool for lifting individuals and families out of poverty. It also helps children succeed—fostering improved health, better school performance, higher rates of graduation and college attendance, and higher earnings as adults.

Unfortunately, under the federal statute and Oregon's law supplementing the EITC, only the families of workers with social security numbers are permitted to reap these benefits. Taxpayers who are not eligible for SSNs are issued individual taxpayer identification numbers (ITINs). This group is made up largely of undocumented workers. According to the EITC Eligibility Workgroup, 90,000 children (10% of all children in Oregon) live in ineligible households with one or more working parents.

As originally written, this proposed legislation did two things—it made ITIN holders eligible for Oregon's EITC benefits, and it also paid them the benefits they would have received under the EITC federal statute. Since Oregon pays 9% or 12% of the federal EITC, if a family received \$3000 in benefits from the federal statute, it would receive an additional amount of either \$270 or \$360 depending on their child's age, giving them either \$3270 or \$3360 annually.

Before HB 2819 passed out of committee, the "make whole" portion was deleted. This means that, if this legislation passes, undocumented families would receive only \$270 or \$360 annually. Obviously, the addition of this sum would have absolutely none of the benefits outlined above, and all of the claimed benefits its authors touted would be lost.

For this reason, I am begging the committee to restore the original language of HB 2819 so that the legislation can do what it is supposed to do—treat all workers who pay income taxes equally by ensuring that their EITC benefits are also equal. This is the only way to create, as its authors intended, racial equity in Oregon's revenue system and increase the flow of dollars to under-compensated immigrant communities throughout the state.

Thank you.