

Susheela Jayapal



Multnomah County Commissioner, District 2

February 16, 2022

House Committee on Rules
355 Capitol Street NE, HR C
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Testimony on HB 4157: Cost of Living Support Payments

Dear Chair Smith Warner, Vice Chairs Drazan and Holvey, and Members of the House Rules Committee,

I am Susheela Jayapal, Multnomah County Commissioner for District 2, which consists of North, Northeast, and parts of East Portland.

I am writing today in support of HB 4157, which provides stimulus payments to low-income workers. We are now entering our third year of learning to live with a devastating pandemic – one that has impacted the lives of all Oregonians, but has had the most consequential impacts for Black, Indigenous, people of color, and low-income residents. These are also the residents most likely to have served in essential roles, working long hours for low pay, and offering in-person services at considerable risk to their health and that of their families.

At Multnomah County, we have seen up close the economic impact of the pandemic. We have seen working families forgo COVID testing because they couldn't afford to take time off work; struggle to pay rent; and stand in block-long lines for food boxes at Bienestar de la Familia, a County program in my district. While the broader economy has made strong gains in the past year, those gains have accrued primarily to those at the top of the income ladder; and, at the same time, cost of living increases have fallen most heavily on those at the bottom of that ladder.

We know that cash payments make a huge difference in the lives of these families: they can help pay a utility bill, buy necessary medicine, or supply essentials like diapers and baby food. They also ease stress, allowing families to better cope with the obstacles they face in their daily lives.

We also know that such cash payments are money well spent, with an up-front cost that is substantially less than the cost of supporting families once they fall through the gaps in our social safety net. In short, the payments proposed by HB 4157 will provide meaningful relief and a buffer against economic instability; and will also provide a lift to local economies across the state.

I urge you to support HB 4157 and provide much-needed relief to Oregonians.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Susheela Jayapal". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Susheela Jayapal