



February 17, 2022

RE: Testimony supporting HB 4157 for cost of living supports to Oregon's lowest-income workers

TO: Chair Smith Warner, Vice Chairs Breeze-Iverson and Fahey, and Members of the Committee:

My apologies for not being able to deliver testimony "live" during today's important rules committee meeting. It is not a sign of the strength of our support for this bill, which we believe to be very important for two reasons:

- 1) it provides immediate relief for those Oregonians among us who need it the most to meet their basic needs, and
- 2) it continues to demonstrate how possible and effective cash support is for those whose incomes are not keeping pace with the cost of living; we'd like to see more of this into the future.

Human Solutions has been working to end poverty and homelessness in East Multnomah County for nearly 34 years. In that time, we have learned a few things about how hard it is to climb out of poverty, especially in circumstances like this multi-year pandemic when the most marginalized are hardest hit by health and job risks. We also know that when people experience poverty, they simply don't have enough money to afford the basics for themselves or their children. Giving people money directly alleviates that issue immediately. **While a small cash infusion like the one proposed here won't end individual or statewide poverty, it WILL help immensely in the near term to buy food, pay rent and utilities, repair a broken car, and other essentials that are causing real hardship right now.**

We applaud that this bill proposes to distribute funds automatically to those qualifying through EITC eligibility. Far too often safety net systems make accessing help so hard it never reaches its destination – and requires incredible amounts of time and energy to apply from people who have none of either, often to not get help in time anyway. We also support the inclusion of undocumented workers who cannot qualify through the EITC mechanism. Truth is, we are all Oregonians and all deserve the same basic level of dignity. **Further, most likely every penny of these funds will be spent in our local economies to buy basic supplies in a short period of time. People with very low incomes save less because they cannot afford to, so these funds will have another quick return on investment as they are spent locally.**

Human Solutions operates a broad range of anti-poverty programs, from emergency shelter to permanent affordable housing, after-school mentoring to career support – and a lot more in between. We know from decades of experience that climbing out of poverty and/or homelessness is not a quick endeavor. We work with folks every day to create career plans, start job training, search for housing they can afford to stay in, and more. We see how hard they work to have the long-term housing and economic stability we all deserve; they are heroes, really, as they try to make it work in a system that is rigged against so many – especially those who identify as Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color, who did not and still do not have the same advantages as white Oregonians. And they deserve this



assistance from the state they call home. This bill is a no brainer and we hope to see more like it into the future.

Thank you for your work finding innovative ways to help fellow Oregonians with low incomes better afford the rapidly rising cost of living we are experiencing during this pandemic. We all deserve to have our basic needs met, and providing cash is the quickest, most efficient way to boost people's quality of life.

Sincerely,

Andy Miller, Executive Director
Human Solutions

About Human Solutions:

Our Mission

Human Solutions counters the forces that keep people and communities in poverty by building relationships and assets that create opportunity – today and for future generations. Here's how:

- **We partner** with people and communities impacted by poverty so they can achieve long-term housing and economic security.
- **We invest** in affordable housing and community assets that contribute to strong, inclusive neighborhoods.
- **We advocate** with our community for policies and investments that expand housing and economic opportunity, eliminate wealth inequality and end poverty.

East Portland/East Multnomah County, Oregon is our home and the heart of our investments, advocacy and programs.

Our Vision

Human Solutions envisions vibrant, healthy neighborhoods where all people can share in the security, hopes and advantages of a thriving, supportive community.