



Oregon School Employees Association

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House Committee on Rules
Rep. Barbara Smith Warner, Chair

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to express strong support for House Bill (HB) 4157 on behalf of the Oregon School Employees Association (OSEA). As you know, OSEA represents more than 23,000 workers in nearly all levels of Oregon public education, including Head Start programs, K-12 school districts, ESDs and community colleges. OSEA members perform many of the tasks that keep Oregon public schools safe and functional for students, administrators and teachers.

We know that many of our members, who have done some of the most essential work to maintain services for our kids and our communities, qualify for the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and will benefit directly from the planned payments in HB 4157. These are working families in literally every county in Oregon, and disproportionately our members live and work in smaller and more rural communities that were facing significant economic struggles even before the pandemic. Cost-of-living support for those working families translates directly into an economic boost for communities that need it most. This is also true in other, non-geographically marginalized communities, as the significant representation of women and people of color among our membership – and among lower-income working families throughout Oregon – makes the targeting of EITC claimants a good proxy for identifying the Oregon families most in need of state support as we try to finally escape the COVID-19 pandemic and its many harms.

While targeting this cost-of-living support to EITC-recipient families is a good policy approach, it's important to also note that workers who can't claim dependents and receive the EITC have also been significantly impacted by the pandemic. A significant number of OSEA members aren't parents, or are grandparents who are helping to raise grandchildren in their home, and they won't qualify for support via HB 4157. This is not an argument to change or "not do" the sort of payments described in this good and important bill. Instead, it's a simple recognition that one particular policy approach, no matter how good, won't be a sufficient response to the very real and in some cases life-changing effects of this pandemic. We look forward to working with legislators on other policies that also help to support Oregon's working families in critical ways that reflect, like this bill does, recognition of the many kinds of harm caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and thoughtful policy work to make sure all Oregonians can see some relief.

Thank you for your support of Oregon's education workers and HB 4157.

Bob Estabrook
Government Relations Specialist

The Oregon School Employees Association (OSEA) is an affiliate of the AFL-CIO, the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and the American Association of Classified School Employees (AACSE).