



Date: March 7<sup>th</sup>, 2023  
To: Senate Committee on Human Services  
From: Jennifer Parrish Taylor, Director of Advocacy and Public Policy for the Urban League of Portland  
Re: Support for the Nonprofit Modernization Act, SB 606

Chair Blouin, Vice-Chair Robinson, and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of Senate Bill 606. My name is Jennifer Parrish Taylor, and I am submitting this testimony on behalf of the Urban League of Portland. The Urban League of Portland is one of Oregon's oldest civil rights and social service organizations, empowering African Americans and others to achieve equality in education, employment, health, economic security, and quality of life across Oregon and SW Washington.

The State of Oregon routinely relies on nonprofits and our specific expertise to fill an essential role in our community; it is often the gaps in service and assistance that we step into. For the Urban League, as a Black organization who is comprised of the community we seek to impact, our proximity is vitally important not only to the success of our work, but to the State. Our role in the community is to promote not only the well-being of the most vulnerable Oregonians through providing basic needs like food and shelter, offering opportunities for education and economic advancement, workforce development, protecting our civil rights, but to ensure that we are also thriving. At the Urban League of Portland, one of our core guiding values and principles is that our staff are often hired and trained from the communities we serve; we understand the importance of ensuring that those who work for and represent the League see their lived experience as appropriate and valued work experience and that they should be paid commensurately.

But we are facing a crisis as our staff face an incredibly high rate of burnout and turnover. Human Service Workers are woefully underpaid though they provide vitally important wraparound services that our communities need and benefit from. Human Service Workers (often BIPOC, front-line workers with lived experience) are routinely tasked with meeting human needs by focusing on prevention as well as remediation of problems. This has been further exacerbated by the pandemic as we have seen nationally. For example, in Massachusetts, "Some programs are facing vacancy rates as high as 60 percent. At the same time, the need has increased, particularly in behavioral health, and the wait for services — ranging from addiction treatment to day programs for people with developmental disabilities, to youth and elderly support — is growing. Nearly every sector in the state is experiencing labor shortages. But in these mainly nonprofit human services jobs, the effects are far-reaching. Workers dealing with COVID-induced stress are pulling double shifts to make up for staffing shortages. And



with so many jobs going unfilled, vulnerable populations aren't always able to get the vital services they need."<sup>1</sup>

We're seeing the same trends in Oregon; nonprofits face a daunting barrier to fulfilling their essential role on behalf of the state. Nonprofits cannot exist without nonprofit employees, and nonprofit employees have an incredibly high rate of burnout and turnover. According to the Nonprofit Association of Oregon's Compensation and Benefits Report, in 2020, "the average turnover rate for full-time staff was 19%, and the average turnover rate for part-time staff was 36%."<sup>2</sup> Creating a fund that we could draw from to not only pay our workers, but retain them, would be vital in maintaining long term and consistent relationships with clients who typically need deeper and longer-term investments inclusive of wrap around services that are specific to their individual needs.

Much of our work is rooted in and dependent upon the relationships we have developed over time within our communities; we take a very different but proven approach with our clients. What this means is that where others may have given up, we double down and invest in someone who is seeking services. This is not a value universally shared by those working within the nonprofit sector and though we are in support of much of what this bill is seeking to address and remedy, we do have our concerns that work that will continue to propagate systems of engagement rooted in white supremacy and paternalism, whose work is dependent upon the status quo to keep them in business, are not stood up financially by this fund. To be clear, there is a lot of good work being done by organizations that would like nothing more to be out of business but there also continues to be real serious harm inflicted on those seeking services. We ask that you support SB 606 but that this process continues to be a thoughtful one informed by community.

Respectfully,

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.bostonglobe.com/2021/10/02/business/human-services-agencies-face-staffing-crisis-delaying-services-those-need/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5ed94da22956b942e1d51e12/t/63d95058cbb5e24589229a45/1675186268676/NPMA+one-pager.+Updated+1.30.pdf>