

To: Ways and Means Committee

From: Paula Peña-Urenda

Date: April 8, 2023

RE: Ways and Mean Roadshow 2023 - Portland

Dear Members of the Ways and Means Committee.

For the record, my name is Paulita Peña-Urenda & I've held various positions at the Oregon Dept. of Education for nearly 20 years in Salem, while also operating my own small business as farm labor contractor with local farmers throughout the whole state for almost 25 years. I ask this committee to support the Governor's strategic decision to use all available current resources to invest in key priorities. Oregon's reserves are already healthy and strong. Rather than saving more for a future Rainy Day, we need to make investments now.

I'm currently an Office Specialist 2 that has been working out of class for over 5 years as an executive assistant in the Office of Finance, Information and Technology. I am the only person of color who currently supports over 60 staff by myself. I have 5 full time positions written into my one current position while also being the main interpreter and translator for Spanish speaking parents when they call about their students 504 plans and special educational plan. As a certified interpreter at the state and federal level, I am spending weeks helping monolingual parents from our 196 school districts. This alone is another whole classification and full-time job that is not even listed under state employment.

I am currently the main source of income for my family since my husband was illegally fired from his job after an on-the-job injury. I have 5 boys, and one is a special needs child. I am at stage 3 renal failure, and have several autoimmune diseases that have been debilitating. I recently lost my father unexpectedly 2 weeks ago, and I now have to also care for my mother. This is all on top of my full-time job for the state. I have an entire community I support and I am asking for your support too. Less than 7% cost of living does not even cover the inflation rate of gas. My small family of 7 has grown now to 10. We've gone through 3 years of firewood this winter alone. We did this because it was cheaper for my family to have space heaters than having our gas furnace on. Due to my very restricted diet, it has been more expensive to follow my doctor prescribed renal failure diet.

I am here today to ask you to invest in the work that fellow state workers and I care for our most vulnerable, and so much more. Every Oregonian is affected by our work, and we care deeply about the services we provide for the people of Oregon and take pride in our work.

Sincerely,

Paula Peña-Urenda