

Joint Committee on Ways and Means

Re: **Support the ODHS Tax Infrastructure Grant Program**

Name: Matt Bartolotti

City/County: Portland Oregon

Organization: [Metropolitan Family Service](#) & [MFS CASH](#)

Co Chairs, Vice Chairs, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Matt Bartolotti, and I am the Deputy CEO with Metropolitan Family Service. I'm writing to respectfully urge you to maintain full funding for the Oregon Department of Human Service's Tax Infrastructure Grant program (TIG).

This program is a proven investment in both affordability for Oregon families and responsible state budgeting because it strengthens the two major "free tax help" lanes Oregonians actually use:

- VITA sites are built to reach low-to-moderate income working families, people with disabilities, and taxpayers with limited English, so they can file accurately and claim credits like the EITC and Child Tax Credit. MFS' VITA program also provides IRS Certification for many AARP Foundation Tax-Aide volunteers.
- AARP Foundation Tax-Aide sites play a distinct, complementary role by serving many older Oregonians, often people with retirement income questions, fixed incomes, or who need a trusted in-person option.

In Oregon, these programs don't compete, they cover different needs. The Tax Infrastructure Grant program is the connective tissue that helps communities staff up, train volunteers, expand language access, and keep more sites open in more places, for more kinds of taxpayers year round.

Last year alone, grantees helped file 17,650 tax returns statewide which is nearly four times as many as were filed prior to grant funding. The households served have an average income around \$30,000, meaning these are the Oregonians who feel every rent increase and grocery bill spike immediately. Families received an average state and federal refund of nearly \$2,400, providing critical support for housing, food, utilities, and childcare. This is especially important in the coming years as many households may experience reductions in SNAP and TANF.

The Tax Infrastructure Grant program is also budget-positive for the state. For every \$1 million invested, \$4.5 million in Oregon taxes were paid, and total state tax revenue increased by \$18 million which is a 13% increase over the prior year. The program also

improves compliance by helping people who have never filed or who have filed inconsistently return to the tax system, strengthening Oregon's revenue base in a way that is both practical and humane.

In addition to supporting families, the program reduces workload for the Department of Revenue by increasing accurate, on-time filings and assisting taxpayers with prior-year corrections and correspondence. This kind of government forward and friendly support, helps prevent small problems from becoming expensive collections and enforcement issues later.

In a year when affordability and budget balance are top state priorities, the Tax Infrastructure Grant program clearly advances both. I respectfully ask that you oppose any cuts to this program and continue investing in services that strengthen Oregon's tax system and support working families, seniors, and communities who are too often left out of the benefits they've earned.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

**Matt Bartolotti**

**Deputy CEO**

**Metropolitan Family Service**