

May 15, 2025

From: Racial Justice Council

To: Joint Committee on Ways and Means

Re: Request to Support funding for Racial Justice Council Funding Priorities

The Racial Justice Council advises the Governor and provides communities that have been historically excluded from decision-making tables more meaningful access to and a voice in the policy making that directly impacts the lives of Oregonians of color.

We, members of the Racial Justice Council's, are writing to express strong support for **three specific funding requests**:

- **HB 3528** - Funding allocation of **\$4 Million** Higher Education Coordinating Commission for distribution to the University of Oregon and Portland State University for water-related research and grants.
- **HB 3170** - Funding allocation of **\$10 Million** to the Department of Human Services for providing grants for Resilience Hubs and Resilience Networks.
- **HB 3010** - Funding allocation of **\$784,124** for Oregon State University to develop and publicize a program for Spanish language pesticide education.

Below, we offer additional context and background for each of these critical funding requests:

(HB 3528) Water Equity Fund- Request for \$4 Million

In 2023 and 2024, the Racial Justice Council supported the funding for Water Equity to support communities across the state facing water injustices. In 2023, the University of Oregon's Just Futures Institute used \$500,000 to launch a Community Water Justice capacity award program for environmental justice communities. Many organizations across the state were funded through this program and have delivered successful outcomes.

Examples of Successful Outcomes of Former Water Equity Fund Awards Include:

- The first state allocation for 2023-2025 biennium of \$500,000 funded nine projects positively impacting:
- Tribal restoration of waterways in the Willows
- Emergency preparedness and response in the Portland Metro area Education, leadership and workforce development in the water sector across the state
- Food security and food sovereignty in Clatsop County and Jackson County

The second allocation for 2024-2026 biennium of \$1 million is currently:

- Funding additional community-led projects and delivering awards to tribal communities through Portland State University's Institute for Tribal Governments' Tribal Water Empowerment Awards and University of Oregon.
- Supporting two workforce development and water stewardship projects with youth and elders in Portland Metro, Lane County, Klamath County, and Linn County.
- Focusing on public education resources on water in the state that address challenges communities face during emergencies; the development of informational videos on water law, policy, and infrastructure between UO, PSU, and OSU to support communities, lawmakers, policy makers, and state agencies working with the most vulnerable and impacted communities when drought, heat waves, pollution, storms, and wildfires jeopardize water quality.

- Foster increased collaboration between entities such as community-based organizations, housing providers, state agencies, landlords, and farm operators/employers to support the most impacted communities through shared educational materials.

For 2025, appropriated funds would:

- Go to the University of Oregon for the Climate Solutions Center to conduct research to understand and address water needs of environmental justice communities, and to award grants to support community-led water projects and increase local resilience in the face of droughts, wildfires, devastating storms, and heat waves that impact communities' health and access to water.
- Go to Portland State University for the Institute for Tribal Government to conduct research to understand and address water needs of tribal communities and to award grants. Communities across Oregon will continue to benefit and be able to respond to community needs with the full funding of this program.

(HB 3170) Resilience Hubs and Networks – Request for \$10 Million

During the 2020 wildfires that impacted many communities across the state, many people came together to support and provide resources to their neighbors. In 2023, the Legislature allocated \$10 Million dollars to support Resilience Hubs and Networks. Resilience Hubs and Networks will keep communities safe, healthy, and well-connected before, during, and after disasters such as extreme weather and wildfire. During the 2024 grant cycle, the state received over 700 applications and was only able to fund less than 15% of applications submitted, demonstrating the clear need for continued funding of this program. Now is the time to continue to invest in community resilience and support the many organizations who were left without funding.

(HB 3010) Spanish-Language Pesticide Education Program – Request for \$784,124

Lastly, our final funding request is for the Pesticide Education Program. Farmworkers, many of whom are Latino and Spanish-speaking, form the backbone of Oregon's agricultural workforce. While resources for pesticide education do exist, additional funding is needed to expand access by incorporating cultural relevance, multilingual materials, and improved accessibility across diverse communities. By allocating funds to Oregon State University for this initiative, Oregon can support the development of a Spanish-language pesticide education licensing program modeled after successful efforts in other states. This will help ensure that all workers have the opportunity to better understand safe pesticide use practices and minimize potential risks associated with exposure.

We understand that this year we are heading into uncertain territory when it comes to our state budget, yet we cannot stall the progress Oregon has made in investing in communities that have been historically excluded from decision-making tables that directly impact the lives of Oregonians of color.

On Behalf of the Racial Justice Council,

Ana Molina, Member, Racial Justice Council
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