



UNIVERSITY OF OREGON

February 1, 2016

Higher Education Coordinating Committee  
775 Court Street NE  
Salem OR 97301-3827

Dear Committee Members:

Thank you for this opportunity to share how the Labor Education and Research Center (LERC) at the University of Oregon is providing unique educational opportunities and conducting important research that benefit working Oregonians. Since its creation in 1977 with funding provided by the Oregon legislature, LERC has made the resources and expertise of the university available to workers, the union movement, and other stakeholders interested in the fields of work, the economy, and employment relations. In recent years, LERC's research has increasingly focused on collaborative efforts to assist lower income women and minorities by promoting economic equity. The attached documents help illustrate the breadth and importance of our work.

At an event marking its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary, UO president Dave Frohnmayer praised LERC as "one of the UO's most successful units in integrating the three essential functions of the university: teaching, research, and public service." With its activities in each of these arenas and through an extensive set of collaborations and partnerships, LERC fulfills the public service mission of the university and helps improve the quality of life for working Oregonians.

With faculty based in Portland and Eugene, LERC provides accessible and relevant educational programming that helps workers improve their leadership capabilities and prepares them to become more effective advocates in their workplaces and communities. Each year, more than 2,000 people attend workshops, conferences, institutes, and other educational and training programs conducted by LERC.

LERC's reputation as one of the country's premier labor education programs has led to work with national organizations such as the Association of Flight Attendants and the International Association of Theatrical and Stage Employees. One of our recently retired faculty members, Lynn Feekin, will soon receive a lifetime achievement award from the United Association of Labor Educators, further attesting to the position of respect that LERC occupies in the field of workers education.

**LABOR EDUCATION AND RESEARCH CENTER**

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*An equal-opportunity, affirmative-action institution committed to cultural diversity and compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act*

LERC teaches subjects such as grievance handling, collective bargaining, and labor law that help workers have an effective voice on the job. We have conducted numerous trainings supporting joint labor-management efforts to resolve workplace conflict in both public and private sector settings, including programs at Kaiser Permanente, Daimler-Chrysler, PG&E and the city of Bend. We are especially proud of helping to educate generations of Oregon's union leaders in the practice of positive labor relations. Indeed, many of our students have gone on to hold top leadership positions in their organizations and to serve effectively in other leadership roles as well.

More recently, we have expanded our commitment to providing lifelong learning opportunities through new offerings covering subjects such as leadership development, strategic planning, organizational change, economic development, and equity and inclusion. These expanded educational initiatives are enhancing professional and career development opportunities for our constituents. We award certificates of completion at several of our more extensive programs, including our popular Collective Bargaining Institute, the annual LERC-OR AFL-CIO Summer School, and the upcoming Pacific Northwest Labor Leadership Institute. The latter is an offshoot of a national leadership program that LERC has been asked to deliver to regional labor and community leaders.

LERC faculty conduct applied and scholarly research on issues related to work and employment, producing new knowledge that can be used by multiple stakeholders (e.g., unions, employers, policy makers, community organizations, NGO's) to make workplaces more safe, efficient, and productive. Our research faculty also collaborate with researchers at Oregon Health & Sciences University, Oregon State University, and Eastern Washington University, to name a few. Our worker health and safety researcher, Dr. Jennifer Hess, has conducted well-received research on safe patient handling practices in nursing facilities and ergonomic improvements in construction jobs such as masonry work.

LERC's 2015 report on the low-wage economy in Oregon (summary attached) and a subsequent conference on "Equity and the Economy" won widespread praise from policy makers for drawing attention to one of the state's major ongoing challenges. Other stakeholders have cited our research on immigration, apprenticeship, the contracting of public services, worker protections and labor standards, and occupational safety and health as useful and relevant for their efforts to improve the quality of jobs and raise living standards.

Within the past year, LERC extended its research into a new arena when it conducted 35 recorded interviews with home health care workers under a grant from the Library of Congress. This study documented the "quiet revolution" that has improved the working conditions of providers and enhanced the care received by their clients since the advent of collective bargaining. This work will lead to additional research and programming that elaborate on this important success story.

LERC also assists its multiple stakeholders by providing extensive consultative and technical assistance. Our faculty serve on the boards and committees of nonprofit

organizations and agencies, respond to media requests for background on work and employment issues, make public presentations on issues related to work and employment, and help our diverse constituents to think creatively and effectively about the rapidly changing world of work. Our service activities have included work with the Governor's Green Jobs Council, the Oregon Workforce Investment Board, the Oregon Young Employee Safety Program, the Integration Network for Immigrants in Lane County, and the Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon (APANO). For the last three decades, LERC has coordinated the biennial Public Employees Relations Conference. This event attracts several hundred management and union practitioners and explores new ways to enhance positive labor relations in the public sector.

At LERC, we are keenly aware of the profound changes that are transforming the workplace, the economy, and the employment relationship in the state of Oregon. We pledge to continue helping our constituents address these changes and meet the challenges presented by the twenty-first century economy and the twenty-first century workplace.

I would welcome the opportunity to provide additional information at your request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bob Bussel". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "B".

Bob Bussel, Director

## The Labor Education and Research Center at the University of Oregon: An Overview

### History and Mission

The Labor Education and Research Center (LERC) at the University of Oregon was established in 1977 with funding from the Oregon Legislature. LERC's founding was promoted by an alliance of unions, legislators, university faculty, labor relations professionals, and community leaders who believed that workers and unions in Oregon needed a specific program granting them access to the resources and expertise of the state's higher education system. LERC's mission is to:

- **Provide** direct, hands-on education, training, and consultation to workers and unions at the grassroots level.
- **Encourage** creative and critical thinking that empowers working adults to participate meaningfully in workplace and community affairs.
- **Conduct** applied research on vital social issues related to work, employment, and labor relations.
- **Make** Oregon's workplaces safer by providing educational programs and conducting research on occupational safety and health issues.
- **Connect** the university to the broader community by making its resources more readily available to working Oregonians and labor organizations.
- **Expand** public awareness of Oregon's rich labor, working-class, and labor relations history.

**Faculty:** LERC currently has a six-member faculty with strong roots in the union movement and an interdisciplinary range covering such areas as sociology, history, economics, industrial relations, education, and public health.

**Advisory Board:** LERC has a thirty-member advisory board of statewide labor, political, and community leaders who provide the program with support, guidance, and input.

### Educational Programs

LERC annually conducts approximately 50-60 educational programs, conferences, and institutes for both local and regional audiences that serve approximately 2,000-2,500 rank-and-file union members, staff, and leaders. These programs include:

- Non-credit education and skills training throughout the state.
- Conferences on important labor and workplace issues in campus and off-campus settings.

- Multi-day residential institutes for union staff and rank-and-file leaders.
- Occupational safety and health training.
- Customized educational programs and classes tailored to the needs of individual unions and community organizations.

### **Research on Vital Work and Employment Issues**

LERC faculty members are available to conduct applied research tailored to the specific needs of unions, policy makers, and community partners. Recent initiatives include research in the following subject areas:

- Issues affecting the health care industry and health care workers.
- Apprenticeship programs.
- Ergonomics and workplace health and safety.
- Privatization and contracting out.
- Union election procedures and the right to organize.
- Industry-specific occupational and labor analysis.
- Immigration
- Equity and the economy
- Labor standards

### **Technical Assistance and Consultation**

LERC's technical assistance efforts feature intensive consultation and aim to help organizations achieve tangible results. Recent collaborations with union partners include:

- Developing a communications structure to support membership participation and mobilization.
- Staff development and mentoring programs.
- Preparation for collective bargaining.
- Creating strategies for recruiting new members.
- Strategic planning and goal setting.

### **Public Service and Public Policy**

LERC faculty provide technical assistance to legislators, community organizations, and governmental agencies at the state, local, and federal level and frequently furnish background information on labor and employment issues to the news media. They also participate actively in professional associations related to labor education and their particular academic disciplines.

## **Publications**

- Books on labor history and employment policy.
- Monograph on public sector labor law.
- Academic journal scholarship on work, employment, occupational safety and health, collective bargaining, and labor-management relations.
- Issue-oriented reports and commissioned studies

## **Academic Contributions**

- Credit classes in history and political science
- Internships that places students with unions, government, and other organizations dealing with work and employment issues.
- Co-chairing the Wayne Morse Center for Law and Politics
- Special programs and conferences
- Collaborative research with other University departments and centers
- Service on University committees and task forces

# 4 Decades of Working Hard for Working Oregonians

The Labor Education and Research Center

**LERC** is the premier institution in Oregon that integrates **education, research** and **public service** in addressing issues related to work and employment. At LERC we provide a voice for workers in social and economic decision-making, promoting dignity of labor.

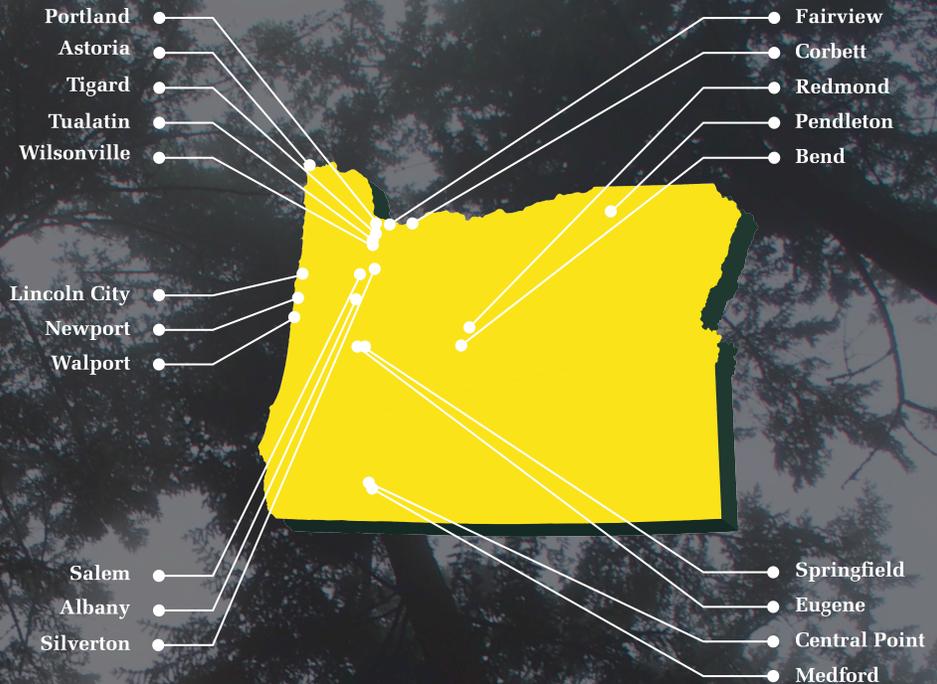
**2,426**

Program participants in 2014

**50**

Programs delivered in 2014

## 2014 Program Locations



### Education

LERC provides a variety of educational programs that teach the basics of union representation, help develop critical thinking skills and prepare workers to become effective advocates in workplace and community settings.



### Research

Faculty members are available to conduct applied research tailored to the specific needs of unions, policy makers, and community partners. Our research subjects have ranged from climate change to issues affecting health care workers.



### Public Service

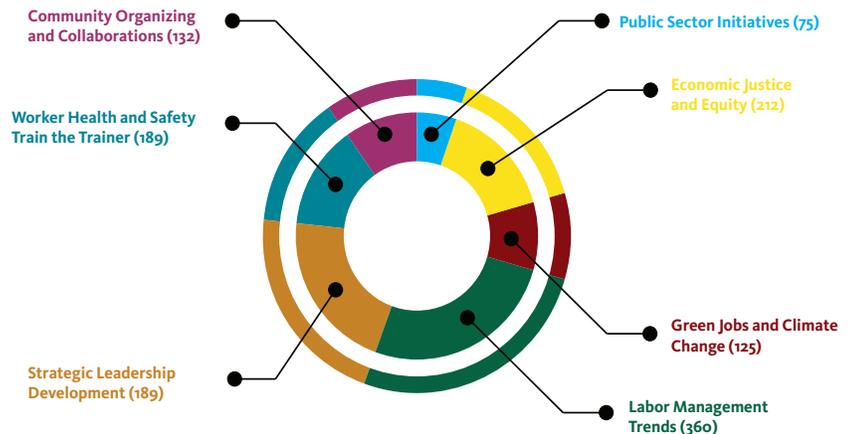
Our faculty provide technical assistance to legislators, community activists, and government agencies at the state, local and federal level and frequently furnish background information on labor and employment issues to the news media.

# Educating Tomorrow's Working Class Leaders

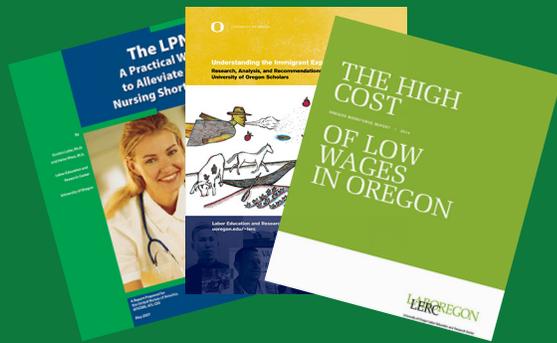
The Labor Education and Research Center provides educational programs in workplace advocacy, leadership development, strategic planning, organizational change, equity and inclusion. LERC has developed educational programs with a range of regional and national organizations, including:

- Kaiser Permanente
- California Teachers Association
- Association of Flight Attendants
- International Association of Theatrical and Stage Employees

## Public Outreach and Presentations 2013-2014



# Researching Vital Work and Employment Issues



Our faculty's research interests span a wide array of subjects. Recent areas of interest and expertise include:

- Economic Inequality
- Immigration
- Climate Change
- Health Care
- Labor Standards and Worker Protection
- Occupational Safety

# Assisting Oregon's Public Service Organizations

At LERC, we provide technical assistance to legislators, community activists, and governmental agencies at the state, local and federal level. Examples of public service include:

- Oregon Workforce Investment Board
- Oregon Blue-Green Apollo Alliance
- Integration Network for Immigrants in Lane County
- Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon
- Oregon Coalition for Health Care Ergonomics
- Oregon Young Employment Safety



## UO LERC Portland 2015-2016

The University of Oregon Labor Education and Research Center (LERC) has had a strong presence in Portland for over two decades and the Metro area remains a significant hub of our educational and research activities. We now have three faculty members at the UO Portland: Barbara Byrd, Helen Moss, and Raahi Reddy. LERC's Director Bob Bussel and Eugene faculty Gordon Lafer and Sarah Laslett also participate in Portland projects. LERC has a national reputation and many of our activities provide opportunities for women, under-represented minorities and a wide swath of Oregonians to improve their communities, share their stories, or raise their level of leadership and civic engagement. Here is a sample of our recent work that is made possible due to our Portland faculty and presence at the UO Portland:

- **Archie Green fellowship: United States Library of Congress American Folklife Center Research Project: "Taking Care, Documenting the Occupational Culture of Home Care Workers."** Project Leads: Bob Bussel and Helen Moss. This project used videography to interview and record thirty-five Oregon Home Care workers speaking about their work and lives. Many of these workers are women and people of color whose personal stories often go untold. Yet they play a critical role in supporting our communities' most vulnerable members: seniors and those with disabilities requiring personal home care. As a follow up to this research project, LERC is working with SEIU 503 to produce video clips and a short film that can be disseminated to policy makers, researchers, and community advocates. Grounded in the experiences and perspectives of workers, their clients, and other stakeholders, these projects will trace the evolution of home care organizing in Oregon and explain how union representation has dramatically improved the lives of caregivers and the populations they serve.
- **Equity and the Economy: Project Lead Raahi Reddy.** Following on a highly successful 2015 report and conference on the "High Cost of Low Wages in Oregon," Raahi Reddy is now working on *The Equity in the Economy Initiative* which focuses on metro Portland. These projects will analyze and report on the broader levers of the Portland regional economy to identify how public and private investments can better leverage precious resources to create not only high road and living wage jobs, but to also remove barriers to employment for women, immigrants and workers of color. LERC will collaborate with Professor Ellen Scott (UO Sociology) on the research. Additional activities will include community-labor collaborations and community convenings.
- **Public Book Presentation: "Fighting for Total Person Unionism: Harold Gibbons, Ernest Calloway and Working-Class Citizenship," Bussel 2015.** In November, LERC director Bob Bussel gave a talk at the UO Portland on his dual biography of labor leaders Harold Gibbons and Ernest Calloway, who championed a new kind of labor movement that regarded workers as "total persons" who are interested in both workplace affairs and the exercise of effective citizenship in their communities. Working through Teamsters Local 688 and viewing the city of St. Louis, Missouri, as their laboratory, this interracial duo forged a political alliance in the 1950s and 1960s that placed their "citizen members" on the front lines of battles for urban revitalization, improved public services and the advancement of racial and economic justice.
- **Strategic Planning, Leadership Development and Organizational Growth:** LERC has expertise and is highly regarded for its ability to help organizations navigate change, develop leaders, and capitalize on opportunities to become more effective. Here are some current projects with a

Portland component:

- **Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon:** Raahi Reddy is working with APANO, which is a statewide organization that develops leaders and encourages civic engagement and policies that benefit Asian Americans in the state. The new five-year plan will help APANO expand and activate members, focus their energies on the most effective strategies, and increase their reach.
- **AFT-Oregon:** Bob Bussel and Raahi Reddy are working with this state affiliate of the American Federation of Teachers that represents 15,000 Oregon workers in K-12, community college and higher education in faculty and classified positions as well as child care workers, in both public and private sectors. AFT-Oregon, in coalition with other unions and community groups, advocates for quality education and health care for all Oregonians, and gives working people a voice in our state's capitol.
- **Oregon Tradeswomen Institute** – In September Barbara Byrd and Sarah Laslett participated in the Tradeswomen Leadership Institute. This is an annual event produced by Oregon Tradeswomen, Inc. in collaboration with LERC to facilitate leadership development, advocacy skills, and unity among all women (union, open shop, self-employed and otherwise) working in the building, construction, mechanical and utility trades.
- **Northwest Labor Leaders Initiative: Project leads: Barbara Byrd and Bob Bussel with support of other faculty:** This intensive leadership training initiative will occur during the first six months of 2016 and includes labor and community leaders from Oregon, Washington, and Western Canada. Trainings will focus on advanced executive level leadership skills such as transformational leadership, strengthening individual leadership skills, and building strong and lasting foundations for the participants' organizations. Presenters include LERC faculty as well as leading Northwest and National leadership consultants. Program planners are placing considerable emphasis on including women and under-represented minorities in the program as participants and presenters.
- **Public Employment Relations Conference:** For more than twenty-five years, LERC has hosted the Public Employment Relations Conference which is a unique opportunity for labor leaders, public employers, attorneys, mediators, and arbitrators to gather and discuss important trends and issues related to public employment in Oregon. This year's conference in Salem on April 14<sup>th</sup> will include a plenary talk by Adrienne Eaton, Professor of Labor Studies and Employment Relations at Rutgers University. Helen Moss is the lead conference organizer.
- **Summer Institute for Union Women:** This past summer LERC's Portland faculty hosted more than 150 women unionists at a four day conference to build leadership skills and networks among women workers. This extremely popular and powerful conference provided support, mentorship, new ideas, and energy to women from throughout the West Coast and western Canada.

# CONSTITUENT COMMENTS & LERC BY THE NUMBERS



## Organizing for Justice June 2014 • Eugene

"The mixture of students and union members contributed to an important and necessary dialogue."

"Both instructors were very knowledgeable which showed in the instruction/teaching. Good communicators."

## Food & Commercial Workers Feb 2014 • Newport

"I have attended many of your workshops and trainings and have enjoyed all of them. You guys rock. I know you put a lot into preparing for us".

"You all did a remarkable job of adapting a program to our industry."

## United Academics UO AFT January 2014 • Eugene

"I'll be holding on to ALL the materials and notes. The examples were helpful, concrete applications of the general principles."

"Very clear instruction, well-organized, dynamic.."

"I had been looking forward to this for months and was not disappointed."

## Labor Management Committee Nov 2014 • Bend

"I am leaving the training excited about how I can use these new ideas."

## AFSCME 3336 December 2014 Corbett OR

"Thank you... I have never left a LERC class w/o being inspired and hopeful. LERC is a one-of a kind tremendous resource for union leaders. This week long Collective Bargaining retreat was beyond my expectations."

## Nurses & Health Professionals 5017 Aug 2014 • Portland

"This was an excellent training. I got a lot out of it and learned more about planning things and how to be more relevant."

## Plumbers & Steamfitters 290 Jan 2014 • Tualatin

"Thank you for your professionalism and knowledge."

## Health Care Bargaining June 2014, Portland

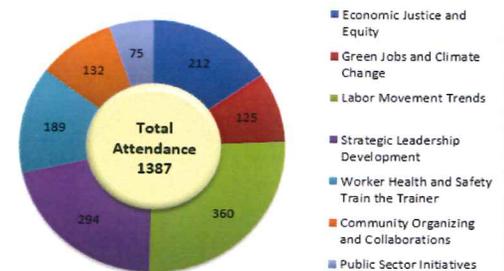
"Clear, concise, and easily understandable. Lynn, as usual, did a great job."

Number of LERC Educational Programs:	
2013	52
2014	50
<b>Total</b>	<b>102</b>

Program Participants:	
2013	1645
2014	2426
<b>Total</b>	<b>4071</b>

Program Locations

## Public Outreach and Presentations



# THE HIGH COST

OREGON WORKFORCE REPORT | 2014

# OF LOW WAGES IN OREGON

LABOREGON  
LERC

University of Oregon Labor Education and Research Center

## Authors

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## Acknowledgments

This Report is a Publication of the University of Oregon Labor Education and Research Center. It was made possible through LERC's Low Wage Economy Initiative and the Strategic Training and Action Research (STAR) Fund. Additional funding for the project was provided by the Oregon Education Association, Service Employees International Union-Oregon, Oregon AFSCME Council 75, Oregon AFL-CIO, International Union of Operating Engineers Local 701 and AFT-Oregon.

We thank Brooke Jackson, Gail Krumenauer, Mark Miller and Dave Yamaka from the Oregon Employment Department for information on jobs and wages in Oregon. Thanks to Laurel Goode, Sue Porter and Betsy Jensvold from the Oregon Office of Forecasting, Research and Analysis for their help with public assistance data. Mark Bielby and Mary Fitzpatrick from the Oregon Department of Revenue provided assistance with income tax data.

For their thoughtful review of the manuscript, we thank Ken Jacobs and Jill Bakken. And we also thank Deborah Mailander and Jennifer Smith for their assistance with the Low Wage Economy Initiative.

The original qualitative study of low-wage workers in Oregon was funded by the Child Care Division of Oregon's Department of Employment. We are grateful to Bobbie Weber and Deana Grobe, with whom we conducted the original research on low-wage work and childcare in Oregon, and to our graduate students, all wonderful research assistants and co-authors on previous publications, Ann Leymon, Miriam Abelson, and Katie Rodgers.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### IN THIS REPORT WE OFFER A DETAILED PORTRAIT OF OREGON'S LOW-WAGE WORKFORCE.

This workforce consists of people employed in occupations that pay a median wage of \$12 an hour or annual median earnings of \$25,000 or less.

We find:

- Over 400,000 Oregonians are employed in low-wage work. Low-wage work is a growing share of Oregon's economy. In many areas of the state where unemployment remains high after the 2008 recession, most of the job openings are for low-wage work.
- Systematic low-wage work (when salaries are set far below the costs needed to raise a family) means the demand for public services is at a record high – over 1 million Oregonians now rely on food stamps and other assistance to feed and support their families.
- Women are more likely than men to end up in low-wage jobs; they are also more likely to be single parents trying to support a family. Low wages and irregular, part-time hours make their lives even more difficult.
- Forty five percent of Latino and fifty percent of African American workers are employed in low-wage industries.
- 75 percent of all low-wage workers fall into just 5 major occupational categories; Sales and Retail; Food Prep and Serving; Personal Care Services; Building and Grounds Cleaning; and Health Care Support.
- The majority of parents we interviewed for this study reported being forced to work erratic schedules and nonstandard shifts, and most reported their schedules changed weekly.
- Workers outside the Portland metro area are far more likely to end up in low-wage jobs than their urban counterparts.

Over 400,000 Oregonians are employed in low-wage work.

### THIS REPORT ALSO EXPLAINS HOW MANY CORPORATIONS USE LOW-WAGE WORKERS AND THE SOCIAL SERVICE SAFETY NET TO SUBSIDIZE THEIR PROFITS.

- Many Oregonians work hard every day but still must rely on public safety net programs to make ends meet. We find that 197,000 Oregonians receiving public assistance in January 2014 worked the previous year.
- The cost of providing this assistance is high—taxpayers subsidize corporations' reliance on a low-wage workforce to the tune of \$1.7 billion a year.
- Most of the workers on public assistance are employed in four major sectors: Accommodation and Food Service; Retail Trade; Health Care and Social Assistance; and Administrative and Waste Services.
- Most employers in the sectors employing workers receiving public assistance are large, profitable corporations.
- Oregon has one of the highest percentages of workers receiving state assistance and one of the lowest corporate tax rates in the country.

### OUR RESEARCH ON LOW-WAGE WORK IN OREGON HAS SEVERAL COMPONENTS.

- We carefully examine official government statistics on employment and wages and provide extensive data documenting the growth of low-wage work and its effects on low-income workers in Oregon.

- Through an evaluation of economic trends, we show that major corporations' reliance on low-wage workers is increasing, and low-wage employment is replacing jobs that used to pay a middle-class salary. While wages decline for most workers, corporate profits are at record highs.
- Through an in-depth analysis of industry trends and public assistance recipients, we examine the cost to Oregonians of the systematic low wages set by major corporations and industries. In our analysis of the 197,000 working adults who were enrolled in Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) in Oregon, we show that taxpayers spend an estimated \$1.7 billion each year providing assistance to working families in Oregon.
- Through 45 interviews with low-wage working parents (in 2008 and 2014), most of whom are single mothers, we put faces to the statistics and come to understand the impact of these working conditions on their lives. These are women and families who play by the rules and work hard, but are still not getting ahead. Their stories underscore the importance of affordable and accessible childcare, reliable schedules, paid sick days and health care. Their stories reinforce the need for legislative action to protect working Oregonians and their families.
- Finally, we identify policy solutions that will reward work and support families by providing workers with higher wages and other support that will give them a fair shot at a better life.