



March 29, 2023

To: Senate Committee on Housing and Development
From: Isa Peña, Executive Committee Member, Oregon Worker Relief
Re: Testimony in Support of SB 918

Chair Jama, Vice-Chair Anderson, and members of the Senate Housing and Development Committee, for the record, my name is Isa Peña and am the Director of Strategy at Innovation Law Lab and I am here today as a member of the Executive Committee for Oregon Worker Relief, a statewide network of community-based organizations striving to solve the exclusionary impacts faced by our community by providing direct aid to immigrants and refugees in Oregon and building systems that support mutual prosperity for all.

Oregon Worker Relief strongly supports SB 918 with the -2 amendment, as it would grant critically needed funding in support of our recently created Home Fund, which provides short-term financial assistance to immigrant Oregonians at risk of eviction and those facing housing instability.

Oregon is experiencing a severe housing crisis and immigrant Oregonians are among some of the most vulnerable community members to eviction and housing instability. SB 918 aims to continue the work started in the 2021-2023 biennium and reduce racial disparities in homelessness and housing stemming from historical and long-standing divestments in Black communities; increase SHAP dollars to Community Action Agencies; continue the work of the Oregon Worker Relief to support immigrant and refugee families through our home fund; and create the Oregon Housing Justice Program.

Through our work, we have seen our immigrant communities often left out of housing investments due to their immigration status or because of cultural and linguistic barriers. With the Home Fund, we want to be able to tell our community that we don't have to get through this housing crisis alone. We don't have to face eviction alone. By coming together and building a network

of care, our community members will be able to stay in their homes and our communities will be more stable, safe, and resilient.

These investments have the potential to make a real impact on our community and its members facing housing insecurity. Support such as the grant specified in the -2 amendment, will go a long way towards ensuring the sustainability of this program. With this funding, we will be closer to reaching the program's full potential of ensuring that all Oregonians regardless of their immigration status have access to housing support programs should they face eviction or housing instability.

We all want to live in a state where everyone has a place to call home. Helping immigrant Oregonians stay in their homes brings our state closer to this vision. Not funding Senate Bill 918 will result in the *direct* eviction and displacement of the Black and brown communities we are currently serving. When we prevent evictions in our communities, we keep families safe and intact, and build a healthier, more resilient Oregon.

On behalf of Oregon Worker Relief, I urge you to support SB 918.

Thank you.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Laura L. Pena". The signature is fluid and cursive, with "Laura" on the first line and "L. Pena" on the second line.