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# Oregon Worker Relief

2023 IMPACT REPORT

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## Immigrant Oregonians are part of our families, communities, workplaces, and places of worship.

Immigrants want the same things as any Oregonian—to work hard, support their families, contribute to their communities, and have a fair shot at building a better life.

Immigrants contribute to our shared prosperity in Oregon by working in our state’s key industries and as small business owners. While our state has long relied on the contributions of immigrant Oregonians to our local and state economies, state policies and programs have systematically excluded people based on their immigration status.

Where Congress continues to fail, state and local policymakers must step up. Here in Oregon, we can’t fix the broken immigration system that leaves many of our immigrant neighbors in legal limbo, but we can pass smart policies to ensure our state’s workers, employers, families, and communities have access to the resources and tools to thrive.

**Oregon Worker Relief** was designed for and by immigrant Oregonians to combat immigrant exclusion in our state through community-led relief programs. Since our founding in 2020, we have partnered with community based organizations and the State of Oregon to deliver pandemic relief, emergency relief for agricultural workers who faced dangerous conditions from heat and smoke, emergency rent assistance, and no-cost immigration legal services to over 93,000 Oregonians who live and work in every county in the state.

# Immigrant Oregonian Snapshot

**1 in 8 workers in Oregon is an immigrant**

**1 in 15 children in Oregon live with a family member who is undocumented**

**Undocumented immigrants pay \$120M annually in state and local taxes**

## The largest shares of immigrant workers were in the following industries

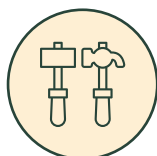
*(Immigrant share of Oregon workers)*



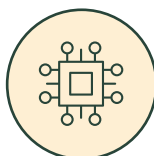
**Crop Production:**  
44.3%



**Landscaping Services:**  
44.3%



**Services to Buildings and Dwellings:** 44.3%



**Electronic Component & Product Manufacturing:** 34.2%



**Nursing Care Facilities:**  
14%

Source: American Immigration Council analysis of microdata from the 1-year sample of the 2019 American Community Survey (ACS), downloaded from the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series

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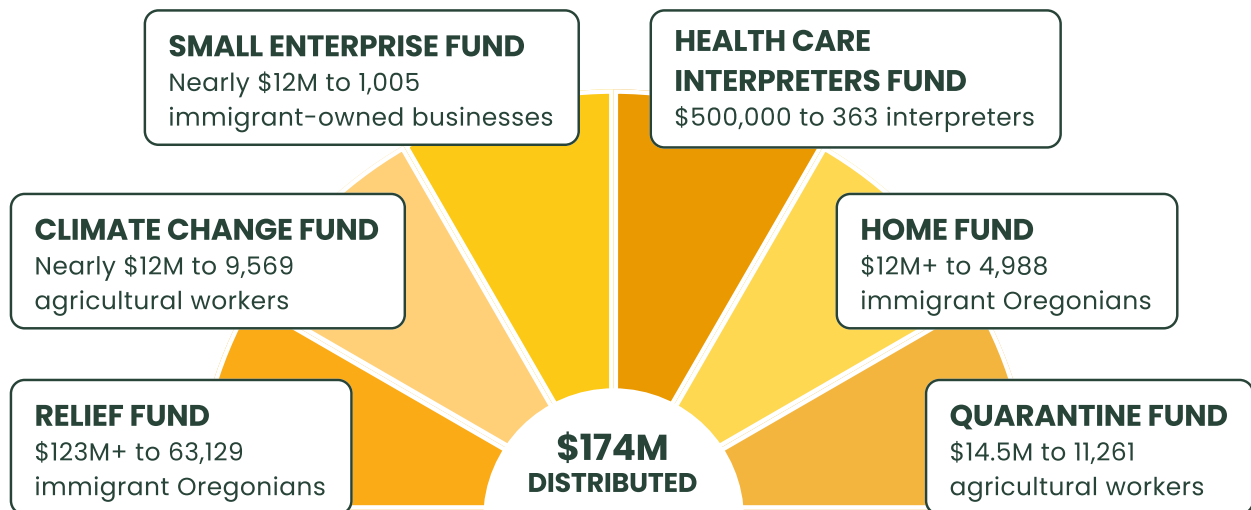
I have been a farmworker in Oregon for 25 years. Now I focus on pruning pine trees. When it is very hot it is very difficult to work, we even have to stop because the pine trees cannot be pruned, it is not good for them. **So imagine how human bodies feel working in excessive heat?**

”Working in the smoke is very dangerous and in those bad conditions some workers go to work because of necessity but they end up getting sick or with side effects.”

— MARIO, OREGON FARMWORKER

# Impact 2020-2023

## Oregon Worker Relief



## Our Programs

### EQUITY CORPS OF OREGON

**4,714 Oregonians** have enrolled and have received services

- **2,407 Oregonians** who faced violence or persecution were empowered to request asylum
- **1,035 Oregonians** have been assisted with work authorization applications

Universal legal representation helps keep families and communities whole by providing access to free immigration legal services. Equity Corps of Oregon helps people facing deportation and/or civic exclusion navigate the immigration system and connect to information and resources. On average, ECO enrolls 125 people each month. Many enrollees are women, children, and survivors of violence. Legal representation is often the difference between an immigrant exercising their rights and accepting an unfair outcome, between an asylum seeker finding refuge and returning to a life-threatening situation, and between a family with mixed status staying together and being split apart.

## HOME FUND

→ 4,988 households served in 28 counties in Oregon

Oregon is experiencing a severe housing crisis and rising rents statewide. Immigrant Oregonians, and Black immigrants in particular, are among the community members most vulnerable to housing insecurity. The Home Fund provides direct relief to immigrant Oregonians who experience or are at risk of experiencing eviction or homelessness.

## CLIMATE CHANGE FUND

→ 9,569 people served in 34 counties in Oregon

Oregonians increasingly face extreme heat waves, wildfires, and unhealthy air. Agricultural workers are often forced to work in dangerous smoke and heat as they cannot afford to miss out on what are already extremely low wages. The Climate Change Fund provides relief to agriculture workers when unsafe heat or smoke pollution prevents them from being in the fields so they can take care of themselves and their families.

## HEALTH CARE INTERPRETERS FUND

→ 363 interpreters benefited

Health care interpreters work every day to help people in their communities get the care they need. The Health Care Interpreters Fund supports the vital work of health care interpreters to remove barriers to care for immigrant Oregonians. Everyone deserves to understand and be understood, especially during life's most difficult and important moments.



“

**As a navigator, I was very connected to the community.** As I said before, OWR has been my stress relief, and as a navigator, my source of income to help me pay my father’s hospital bills when he got COVID.”

— MILKA MENDEZ, OWR NAVIGATOR

# The legacy of disinvestment in *immigrant Oregonians*

Our broken national immigration system and decades of exclusionary policies at the state level have devastating consequences for our state. Our 2023 survey of Oregon Worker Relief recipients reveals ongoing, widespread, and persistent financial insecurity among immigrant Oregonians.

- Only 15% of survey respondents indicated feeling secure in their financial future.
- Less than half indicated they can cover their basic needs over the next six months.
- Most indicated they do not feel confident in being able to find a good job to support their family.
- A large majority expressed concerns about losing their home, and only a few believed they could buy a home.

**Financial assistance from Oregon Worker Relief helped, but more is needed.** Most respondents indicated the financial assistance from OWR only somewhat covered their hardship.

- For those that were not able to fully cover their hardship with OWR funds, most asked friends and family to borrow money.
- A small percentage of respondents obtained a loan or used credit cards.
- A few simply were not able to cover their hardship.



**OWR gave immigrant Oregonians hope for their future financial stability in emergencies.**

- Only 30% of respondents believe they will be able to save and plan for emergencies in the short term.
- However, a majority of respondents indicated that they would be able to keep up with their basic needs and expenses during an emergency if OWR provided another financial assistance opportunity.
- Immigrant Oregonians rely in large part on their friends and family for financial support when facing unexpected expenses such as eviction notices, utility shutoffs, car repair, or health care expenses. Even those who are optimistic about their financial stability may struggle to care for their friends and family who are excluded from safety net programs and have nowhere else to turn.



Without action, the wealth gap in Oregon will continue to deepen along racial and ethnic lines. By investing in our communities, we can strengthen our community resilience in emergencies and make forward progress toward a more thriving and equitable Oregon. Through our community-centered model of identifying and addressing needs, Oregon Worker Relief is well-positioned to continue to provide critical support for immigrant Oregonians.

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Workers cannot miss days of work because their income is too low. They tell us that sometimes we don't have to go to work **but we have so much need to work to have a decent life.**”

— PEDRO, OREGON FARMWORKER

# Supporting Oregon Workers in 2024



## CLIMATE CHANGE FUND INVEST \$9M IN 2024 ✓

Nearly \$12M has been distributed through the Climate Change Fund to 9,569 agricultural workers

Oregonians increasingly face extreme heat waves, wildfires, and unhealthy air, but the dangers of the climate crisis are not evenly distributed. Agricultural workers are often forced to work in dangerous smoke and heat because they cannot afford to miss out on what are already extremely low wages. Many of Oregon’s agricultural workers are immigrants, Indigenous, or Latinx and low-income. Prioritizing relief to the members of our communities who are most impacted is key to developing an equitable and effective response to climate disasters.

The Climate Change Fund’s initial funding was quickly distributed to 9,569 agricultural workers in 34 counties. We urge legislators to invest \$9M in the Climate Change Fund in 2024 to protect workers from climate extremes. Investments in workplace safety for Oregon’s agricultural workers help feed and support our entire state.



Over the past seventy years, the number of extremely warm days increased significantly across Oregon. In June 2021, a record-shattering heat wave caused an estimated 116 deaths in Oregon. The summer of 2021 was the hottest in Oregon’s recorded history, but similar heat conditions are expected to be more common in the second half of this century...**As global temperatures increase, wildfires are expected to become larger and fire seasons increasingly extreme in Oregon and across the West.**

-SIXTH OREGON CLIMATE ASSESSMENT, OREGON CLIMATE CHANGE RESEARCH INSTITUTE, JANUARY 2023

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Updated Feb 12, 2024

# Supporting Oregon Workers in 2024



## HOME FUND

**INVEST \$6M IN 2024** ✓

**Over \$12M has been distributed through the Home Fund to 4,988 people in 28 counties in Oregon**

Oregon is experiencing a severe housing crisis. Immigrant Oregonians, and Black immigrants in particular, are among the community members most vulnerable to housing insecurity. Yet, many safety net programs that help families facing eviction exclude immigrants without legal immigration status.

The Home Fund by Oregon Worker Relief provides direct relief to immigrant Oregonians who experience or are at risk of experiencing housing instability, eviction or homelessness through our statewide network of trusted community-based organizations.

Rent assistance is the single most effective tool to prevent eviction and homelessness—making sure that landlords get paid and tenants stay housed. Culturally specific programs like the Home Fund help ensure that immigrant Oregonians

have access to these crucial services through trusted community connections.

The Home Fund's initial funding was quickly distributed to 4,988 immigrant Oregonians facing eviction in 28 counties, illustrating the deep, unmet need for culturally-specific rent assistance programs statewide. We urge legislators to invest \$6M in the Home Fund in 2024 to fully fund the Home Fund and keep people housed.

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*Updated Feb 12, 2024*

# Supporting Oregon Workers in 2024



## UNIVERSAL LEGAL REPRESENTATION INVEST \$7.5M IN 2024 ✓

Universal legal representation helps keep Oregon families and communities whole by safeguarding against unjust deportation. Without representation, immigrant Oregonians are more likely to be deported, regardless of the merits of their case.

When immigrant Oregonians are deported, our entire state suffers. If a family's breadwinner is deported, family members face housing and food insecurity. Children must cope with the incredible trauma of family separation, with long-lasting psychological impacts.

Since the passage of the Universal Representation bill, a statewide collaborative of community-based organizations, nonprofits, and attorneys has provided no-cost immigration legal services to thousands of Oregonians through Equity Corps of Oregon. However, the program was underfunded in 2023. Legislators can fully fund Universal Representation by investing \$7.5M this session.

Since Oct 2018:

- **4,714 Oregonians** in 24 counties have enrolled and received services.
- **Over 1,100 women** and girls victimized of sexual or physical violence have received assistance.
- **1,808 enrollees** are minor children, including 456 who arrived to this country without a parent or legal guardian
- **2,407 Oregonians** who faced violence or persecution were empowered to request asylum.
- **1,035 Oregonians** have been assisted with work authorization applications.
- **16% of those enrolled** are rare or indigenous language speakers.

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*Updated Feb 12, 2024*

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OWR was lifesaving for me. When I lost my job during COVID, I was afraid of becoming homeless because I couldn't pay my rent. It helped me to meet my family's basic needs... As [an OWR] navigator, I felt very connected to the people that I helped fill out their applications. Many of them used to call me to express gratitude for the financial support from OWR. **I have seen first-hand the emotional and financial relief that this fund provided to its participants.**”

— S. MARTIN, OWR NAVIGATOR



## Partnerships that *strengthen our communities*

The keys to the success of Oregon Worker Relief are deep coalition partnerships, community-led design, and powerful in-house technology expertise. Designed and implemented by the community and for the community, Oregon Worker Relief meets urgent needs statewide while strengthening community resilience for the future. Our partners shape our programs and build on their trusted relationships to deliver relief to their communities.