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Oregon Senate Democrats Comment on Emergency Board Action amid COVID-19 Pandemic

SALEM – Today, members of the Joint Emergency Board convened in a remote meeting in order to approve necessary funding to support Oregonians during the coronavirus pandemic.

The committee allocated over \$30 million to support Oregon’s greatest needs and fill gaps federal assistance has yet to meet. “We are truly in an emergency unlike one we have seen before. Oregonians have taken seriously the Stay at Home order, which has allowed us to bend the curve and lessen the strain on our medical care system,” said Senate Majority Leader Ginny Burdick (D-Portland). “Nevertheless, Oregonians are suffering, and this support will help.”

The Emergency Board prioritized funds to those excluded from federal government resources. Those funds include a \$10 million investment into the Oregon Worker Relief Fund. “Women, people of color and undocumented individuals have been disproportionately affected by this crisis,” said Senator Lew Frederick (D-Portland). “Oregon is doing the right thing to make certain financial support is available to those who may fall outside of stringent federal requirements.”

Specific funds were also allocated to support individuals and families to stay in their homes and to help the medically-vulnerable access safe shelter. In addition, domestic violence agencies will see funds to support their work. “Our domestic violence organizations are stretched, and they have been relentlessly committed to providing services and safe housing to survivors,” said Senator Kathleen Taylor (D-Portland). “The added investments we made today will save lives.”

Today’s Emergency Board action also establishes a \$10 million emergency small business assistance program. This program will support small businesses who did not receive federal assistance. “On the coast and across Oregon our small businesses fuel our economy,” said Senator Arnie Roblan (D-Coos Bay). “It’s important that we take care of them.”

The Legislature will meet in a future special session, likely following the May 20th Revenue Forecast. “The funds available to the Emergency Board are limited,” Senator Burdick noted. “These actions are a critical step to complement federal relief assistance and help Oregonians while we await our state’s formal budget analysis. I appreciate the collaborative work of the Joint Emergency Board and the prioritization of Oregon’s greatest needs during this crisis.”

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