



INCREASED WAGES FOR SOCIAL SERVICE WORKERS at Community Based Organizations in Multnomah County letter guidance, action March-May 2023

Dear (elected official- TBD),

My name is *(your name)* and I am a *(position)* at *(name of your agency OR "a social service agency in our region")*.

Introduction of the topic you plan to speak on, in this case why increasing wages of social service providers at non-profits is necessary and important. You can speak broadly on this issue or dial down on a specific problem. Examples include staff turnover, burnout, competing for the same resources as participants, inability to address mental and/or physical health concerns, high caseloads, etc.

Whatever topic you choose to speak about in your introduction should lead into and frame your **personal story**. You can share a personal story if you're comfortable with that, personal stories are often the most powerful, or you can speak about a situation you've witnessed. This can be a story that negatively impacts the folks we're serving **or** it can be a story of how a worker was harmed emotionally or financially through not earning a living wage.

You can **transition** out of your story with why service delivery through non-profits is important. For example, non-profits often provide culturally specific services, trauma informed services, services delivered by folks with lived experience who they can build trust and connect with, etc. In the case of domestic and sexual violence, non-profits provide a level of privacy that survivors need to stay safe.

If it feels relevant to you or you're comfortable speaking on the topic of **racial equity and gender equality**, this is an additional topic to include. "Ensuring living wages within community-based organizations is a matter of racial equity. We cannot ignore how low wages in social service positions disproportionately impacts communities of color, women, and folks with lived experience who choose to do this work." You can also modify this statement to speak more directly to your experience. An example would be the unpaid labor of bilingual, especially bicultural, workers. You can speak to how this impacts income inequality within communities.

Data points that could be included in testimony:

- The [2022 "Out of Reach" report](#) from The National Low Income Housing Coalition shows that a \$33/hour wage is required to afford an average two bedroom apartment in the Portland Metro Area.

- Currently, there are social service worker positions starting as low as \$16/hour at community based organizations.
- When comparing many of the same positions employed directly by a Multnomah County agency versus a community-based organization, the [position at the county](#) starts at rates a few dollars an hour more and allow for higher pay increases.

Conclude with your ask

Please show your commitment to creating a thriving healthy social safety net workforce in Multnomah County and ensure that our FY24 budget reflects the funding increases necessary to uplift staff wages and benefits at community-based organizations contracted by the county.

Sign off of your choosing (many people choose to thank representatives for their time and/or service),

Your name

This is intended to help direct service providers organize and present their thoughts to elected officials. We want you to make this your own and speak in your own words. This is truly for guidance only and everything is optional. You mainly want to make sure you have an introduction, story, and transition/conclusion that leads into your ask for increased wages.

Also, if you don't feel comfortable mentioning your agency, you can represent yourself and simply mention your role/job title and the region where you work.

If you have any questions, or would like further support or guidance, please reach out to me at jessica@welcomehomecoalition.org.

Thank you!