



February 27, 2023

To: Chair Jama, Vice Chair Anderson, and Members of the Committee on Housing and Development

RE: Senate Bill 603 – Support

Chair Jama, Vice Chair Anderson, and Members of the Committee. For the record, my name is Creeana Bort, I am a member of the Cheyenne River Sioux Reservation, and I represent the NAYA Action Fund located in Portland, OR. Founded by the community, for the community, the NAYA Action Fund is a 501(c)(4) social welfare organization with a mission to expand political advocacy and build electoral power in partnership with the Native community. The NAYA Action Fund provides tools to shape public policy, cultivate leadership, and elect's champions for issues impacting Native people. Our vision of systemic change is youth-centered, family-driven, and elder guided. I write in support of Senate Bill 603.

SB 603 would establish a People’s Housing Assistance Fund Demonstration Program, a 24-month program aimed at understanding how monthly direct cash assistance payments can improve the lives of low-income households across the State of Oregon. The bill seeks to allocate a total of \$25 million over the next biennium to cover the costs of running the program, studying the program, and providing monthly \$1,000 payments to approximately 1,000 households for a period of 24 months (about 2 years). These payments could drastically support our community, as some of them are currently on waiting lists for affordable housing assistance, which they are not receiving. It’s clear that higher incomes reduce barriers our families face in accessing and maintaining housing stability. Housing costs are one of the largest expenses a family has to pay, and as rents rise faster than wages, we cannot expect those already struggling to keep up. Communities that experience the most housing hardships are forced to make choices like paying rent, a doctor's visit, medication, or automotive-related expenses. One key factor about this program is that the monthly payments received by participants in the demonstration program will not count as income for purposes of calculating Oregon income tax, nor for determining eligibility for any state-funded benefits or assistance. Therefore, families can continue to utilize other necessary resources to aid in their economic growth and prosperity.

When making decisions regarding Oregonians, I urge you to consider the people who are often overlooked, our most vulnerable individuals, and help create a future where housing barriers are diminished. On behalf of the NAYA Action Fund, we urge you to pass SB 603.

Sincerely,

Creeana Bort
Policy and Advocacy Organizer
NAYA Action Fund