

**Testimony in support of HB 5011 and
POPs 504 and 505 Homelessness Prevention Resources**

Co-Chairs Woods and Gomberg, and Members of the Sub-Committee,

My name is Kate Suisman. I am an attorney at the Northwest Workers' Justice Project (NWJP). Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this important bill. We represent workers in low-wage jobs when bad things happen to them at work: when they are not paid, or are discriminated against for being in a protected class or are retaliated against for speaking up. Finally, we engage in policy advocacy and try to bring the important perspectives of workers in low-wage jobs and immigrant workers to these policy discussions.

NWJP is in strong support of the Homelessness Prevention package before you. This funding is an important part of the Oregon Housing and Community Services Agency Budget, and an important part of addressing the housing crisis in our state. NWJP's client community is exclusively workers in low-wage jobs. Many live with little savings, and many worry about paying monthly expenses. This is of course greatly exacerbated when workers suffer from wage theft or discrimination and lose hours, pay or their jobs due to an employer's illegal action. We see the struggle to find and keep affordable housing on a daily basis.

Housing stability is a backbone of a healthy life. Personally, each time I sleep poorly, I imagine what it would be like to be unhoused, and to never get a good night's sleep. The eviction crisis in Oregon is devastating and hurts all of us, even if we are lucky enough to have secure housing. As others will testify, Oregonians renters are extremely cost-burdened compared to other states. There is no reason we should allow our state to lag behind other states like this.

Most of our clients are Latine who often face discrimination and other barriers when they seek housing. This funding will help decrease the impact on Latine renters, as well as families and elderly Oregonians. The eviction interventions we've created are making a difference for thousands of Oregonians. Connecting people to eviction prevention services is a proven approach to ensure people can stay housed and prevent the cascade of negative consequences when families are pushed onto the streets. Emergency rent assistance immediately stops the flow of families into homelessness. Typically, households need help just once to regain stability. This program, combined with other supportive services, can prevent the spiraling cycle of homelessness and its resulting physical, economic, and psychological trauma. We can shut off the spigot of high-rent homelessness by ensuring the continuation of our critical safety-net.

We know you have many tough decisions to make in this sub-committee, and we hope you will prioritize this funding which protects one of the most fundamental pieces of a healthy state.

Thank you.