

Submitter: Mary Ann Barham

On Behalf  
Of:

Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On  
Transportation and Economic Development

Measure: SB5511

My name is Mary Ann Barham; and I am a member of First Unitarian Church in downtown Portland and a 35 year resident of Oregon. I am also a part of the Leaven Community Land and Housing Coalition - an interfaith collective of more than 50 faith communities across Oregon devoted to using our land to build diverse affordable housing. One hundred percent of our congregations additionally serve unhoused and unstably housed people as core parts of our outreach services, from food pantries to rental support to advocacy.

I am committed to this work for very personal reasons. Two of my siblings have struggled with mental illness since an early age. Because of this they have had lifelong difficulties holding a job, affording adequate housing, and maintaining emotional stability. At times they have lived in their vehicles. My sister who is now in her mid-60s currently lives in an RV parked on a friend's property. She is desperate to find more suitable and affordable housing, but as we all know the wait lists for any subsidized housing are years long.

Faith communities are often the safety net under the safety net. There is simply not enough we can do to save our communities and neighbors - many of them employed full-time - from houselessness, hunger, and mental health crises for which there are simply not enough resources.

This is clearly an enormous systemic gap that needs an immediate systemic bridge. The Governor's budget is one such bridge, and we are strongly in support of this important and immediate solution to our crisis and encourage you to do so as well.

Sincerely,

Mary Ann Barham  
Portland, OR