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**Joint Sub-Committee on Transportation and Economic Development
Testimony in Support of HB 5011 and Policy Option Packages 504 and 505
March 27th, 2025**

Co-Chairs Woods and Gomber, and members of the Sub-Committee,

On behalf of the Oregon Law Center, I submit this testimony in strong support of Policy Option Packages 501, 502, and 504 and 505, the Homelessness Shelter, Re-Housing, and Prevention Packages in the Oregon Housing and Community Services Agency Budget. These POPs will ensure continuity of evidence-based solutions such as emergency rent assistance and community-based and culturally specific services designed to prioritize prevention of eviction and homelessness in communities across the state, as well as continuity of shelter and re-housing services and supports.

OLC's mission is to achieve justice for low-income communities of Oregon by providing a full range of the highest quality civil legal services. Helping families maintain safe, stable housing is a critical part of our work. As vacancy rates have plummeted and housing has become less and less affordable across the state, our clients have increasingly struggled to maintain stability for themselves and their children. Increasingly, low and moderate-income tenants risk homelessness as a result of any displacement from current housing.

When asking our client communities about their biggest concerns for themselves and their families, the threat of homelessness and losing their housing stability is far and away the biggest fear.

This fear is not without basis - Oregon renters are the 5th most cost burdened in the nation. Rising rents are driving these evictions. In 2024, there were more than 2,000 eviction filings every month. Every filing represents an Oregon household, a family on the brink of losing everything. This rate is more than a third higher than pre-pandemic levels, and shows no sign of slowing down.

The threat of homelessness is greatest for our most vulnerable neighbors: families with children, domestic violence survivors, and seniors. Elderly Oregonians are now the fastest-growing group losing their homes, and Oregon has the highest rate of youth homelessness in the nation. As you know, eviction, displacement and homelessness have lifelong implications for health, education, and economic opportunities.

Solving our homelessness crisis is deeply challenging, but it is not impossible. There are evidence-based prevention solutions already in place to keep thousands of families, seniors, and hard-working Oregonians out of homelessness. Connecting people to eviction protection and homelessness prevention services such as navigation services and legal assistance is a proven approach to ensure people can stay housed. When we can prevent evictions, we can turn off the pipeline into homelessness.



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Preventing eviction is 5–10 times cheaper than letting someone fall into homelessness and trying to rehouse them later. Beyond cost, prevention also avoids trauma, job loss, school disruption, and health risks that come with homelessness.

We urge you to prioritize the critical and proven safety net continued by POPS 504 and 505. Please invest in homelessness prevention and eviction intervention services, which are making a difference for thousands of Oregonians and stemming the tide of homelessness in our communities. Thank you for your hard work on behalf of our low-income clients and the communities we serve.

With one of the highest rates of unsheltered homelessness in the nation, and the highest rate of youth homelessness, we must also prioritize funding to strengthen our network of shelter, rehousing assistance, and responsive and supportive services to help our neighbors forced to live outside because they have no place else to go.

Policy Option Packages 504/505: Please replenish funding for proven eviction prevention programs provided by local community organizations that understand local needs, including community action agencies and culturally specific service providers. **\$173.2 Million**

1. **Emergency rent assistance to prevent homelessness: \$109 Million** is the minimum amount of rent assistance necessary to prevent evictions over the next two years. These funds are distributed by community action agencies and community-based and trusted organizations across the state.
2. **Homelessness prevention services: \$63.2 Million** to support housing navigation services, landlord tenant education and outreach, legal services, tenant supports, eviction prevention, tenant advocacy, and rapid rehousing services.

Policy Option Package 501: Please maintain shelter and supportive services operations. The ongoing shelter system is critical to providing stability and shelter during extreme weather conditions. Services connect vulnerable populations to vital services that help them transition into stable housing. **\$217 Million**

Policy Option Package 502: Please support re-housing supports. This program provides up to 2 years rental assistance and supports to help people find housing and re-establish stability after experiencing homelessness. **\$188 Million**

We can't afford to delay these investments. High rents are pushing more and more families into crisis. Our lawmakers must act now to protect our communities, support our providers, and ensure every Oregonian has a stable framework to build their future.

We urge your strong support of these Policy Option Packages. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony and for your service to Oregon communities.