



March 29, 2025

To: Joint Subcommittee on Transportation and Economic Development
Subject: YES on HB 5011

Co-Chairs Wood, Co-Chair Gomberg, and members of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Transportation and Economic Development,

My name is Cynthia Ramirez and I am a Policy Associate with PCUN, Oregon's Farmworker Union. At PCUN, we work to empower farmworkers and Latinx working families to improve their working and living conditions through community building, organizing, and policy advocacy.

Our members at PCUN voted to make housing justice a top legislative priority. On behalf of PCUN and our members, we are in strong support of HB 5011, particularly Policy Option Packages (POPs) 504 and 505—the Homelessness Prevention Package in the Oregon Housing and Community Services Agency Budget. These POPs will allocate \$173.2 million to sustain emergency rent assistance and community-based, culturally specific services designed to prevent eviction and homelessness across the state.

Oregon renters are the fifth most cost-burdened in the nation, and our eviction crisis is growing, with more than 27,000 cases filed last year. This crisis disproportionately impacts certain populations, including immigrant communities. Language barriers, limited access to legal resources, and systemic discrimination create significant obstacles to stable housing.

In a study done by the Latino Community Association located in Central Oregon, they reported that Latinx households experience a significantly higher degree of housing need and severe housing need compared to white households. Additionally, Latinx families pay a large portion of their income on rent or mortgage. Leaving much less money for other necessities such as food, medicine, transportation, and savings.¹ Furthermore, the Latinx homelessness rate is undercounted. The definition of homeless does not address certain circumstances our community experiences. For example, there may be multiple generations living in a house, multiple people sharing a room, or someone may rent a room in a home. While communal living builds strong

¹ <https://latinocommunityassociation.org/wp-content/uploads/LCO-Housing-10-11-20.pdf>

communities, it is not always ideal for a family and this would not be their first choice if housing were more affordable.²

In a survey conducted in 2018 Central Oregon, they interviewed 1,276 individuals living in shelters, vehicles, transitional housing, or on someone's couch. Out of the 1,276 individuals, 119 identified as Latino or Hispanic.³ In a more recent article, it was found that a growing number of Latinx K-12 students in Oregon are facing homelessness.⁴ Our communities are being displaced and children specifically can go under the radar and not share what they're experiencing out of fear. Additionally, according to the latest data by the U.S. Department of Education during the 2022-2023 school year, there was an overall 14% increase (1.37 million) of homeless students in pre-K through 12.⁵ Children and youth need stability to thrive especially in their developing years of life.⁶

We need to continue investing in our communities because everyone deserves to have stable and secure housing. Continued investment in the Home Fund is essential to sustaining these life-saving services. For the 2025-2027 biennium, we support an additional investment of \$14 million to the Home Fund.

Many of the individuals and families served through Oregon Worker Relief are disproportionately affected by housing instability. Low-wage workers, undocumented Oregonians, and essential laborers—who power our state's economy—are too often excluded from traditional housing assistance programs. The Home Fund fills that gap, ensuring all Oregonians, regardless of immigration status or employment barriers, have access to stable and secure housing.

PCUN urges you to fully fund the homelessness prevention dollars outlined in HB 5011 and prioritize the Home Fund. This is not just a policy decision—it is a moral imperative to ensure that all Oregonians, especially those who have contributed tirelessly to our communities, have a place to call home.

Sincerely,

Cynthia Ramirez
Policy Associate
PCUN

² <https://latinocommunityassociation.org/wp-content/uploads/LCO-Housing-10-11-20.pdf>

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⁴<https://unidosus.org/progress-report/a-growing-number-of-latino-k-12-students-are-facing-homelessness-heres-how-the-law-protects-them-while-schools-try-to-track-and-provide-for-them/>

⁵<https://www.ed.gov/media/document/student-homelessness-america-school-years-2020-21-2022-23-108414.pdf>

⁶<https://unidosus.org/progress-report/a-growing-number-of-latino-k-12-students-are-facing-homelessness-heres-how-the-law-protects-them-while-schools-try-to-track-and-provide-for-them/>