



February 8, 2024

Chair Jama, Vice Chair Anderson and members of the Committee on Housing and Development,

SquareOne Villages is a non-profit in Eugene which began in 2013 just to provide shelter for unhoused community members and expanded to create new models of affordable housing to respond to the housing crisis in our state. We have now developed four affordable projects in Eugene, Springfield and Cottage Grove using housing co-ops owned and operated by the residents. From that experience I wish to address our urgent need for more affordable housing in support of HB 1537.

We all need housing, whether rich or poor, Democrat or Republican, black or white, Duck or Beaver. But for disadvantaged people, especially those with low income, housing can be a life or death issue. Indeed, lack of housing can reduce one's life expectancy by as much as 30 years according to one recent report. As authors Gregg Colburn and Clayton Aldern so clearly demonstrate in their widely acclaimed and thoroughly researched book, Homelessness is a Housing Problem, the availability of affordable housing is the #1 factor that determines rates of homeless, more so than mental health, addiction or even poverty.

We cannot expect the unhoused to find housing when there literally is no housing to find. Homes for Good, the housing authority in Lane County, reports that 1 out 4 every housing voucher gets returned because the recipient cannot find a place to rent. The National Low Income Housing Coalition lists Oregon as 48th among the states for providing affordable housing for these households with very low income and yet we wonder why we have so many unhoused people in our state.

Organizations like SquareOne Villages are trying to change this narrative but we cannot do it with bake sales and charity. We need your help to provide the tools and financial resources so that we can do our part to make sure every Oregonian has a decent and affordable place to call home. HB 1537 provides a number of resources to do just that. I urge your support for HB 1537 to help us meet this urgent need of Oregonians.

Dan Bryant
Executive Director
SquareOne Villages