



Martha Sonato
Legislative Advocate
Oregon Law Center
msonato@oregonlawcenter.org

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

From: Martha Sonato, Oregon Law Center

Re: Support for HB 5011

Date: 03/27/2025

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

On behalf of the Oregon Law Center, I submit this testimony in support of HB 5011, the Oregon Housing and Community Services Budget, 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 responsive services designed to prevent eviction and homelessness across the state. Out of this bucket, we urge the continued funding of \$14 million for [Oregon Worker Relief–Home Fund](#), a culturally responsive program which is a current service delivery provider of OHCS.

The Oregon Law Center is a statewide civil legal aid organization serving low-income clients across a variety of issues that impact their lives. Our clients often come to us with multiple, interconnected legal needs. Their challenges are rarely simple, which is why we take a holistic approach to addressing their legal needs.

One of the top concerns consistently identified by our client communities in our biennial statewide survey is housing affordability. Our communities continue to experience the extreme impact of a housing market that is so unaffordable that families are forced to make difficult choices. One of the communities hardest hit by the housing affordability crisis is the immigrant community. Immigrants are our clients too, and we hear about the challenges they face in accessing traditional rent assistance funds due to a myriad of barriers, including language obstacles, limited access to legal resources, and systemic hurdles, all of which create significant obstacles to stable housing.

We know that targeted investments help reduce disparities and strengthen overall community resilience. We appreciate that OHCS has partnered for several years with culturally responsive organizations to conduct targeted eviction prevention. **We are very supportive of the OWR Home Fund budget request for the 2025-2027 biennium of \$14 million to continue maintenance of effort.**

The OWR Home Fund helps immigrant Oregonians make ends meet by providing up to two months of rental assistance for those who are housing unstable and at risk of

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eviction. OWR has been a grantee of OHCS for several years, delivering critical aid to almost 5,000 individuals in 28 counties through a robust network of 26 community-based organizations that help individuals access this vital program and file their applications.

By continuing to fund the OWR Home Fund, the state can help families remain housed, which has a positive impact on the workforce, the economy, and the overall resilience of our communities.

We urge this committee to support the Homelessness Prevention Package in its entirety and allocate **a dedicated \$14 million to the OWR Home Fund** to ensure that immigrant Oregonians receive the housing assistance they need to remain stably housed.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Martha Sonato
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