



Testimony in Support of House Bill 2100 -1

House Committee on Housing

March 2, 2021

Chair Fahey, Vice Chairs Campos and Morgan and Members of the Committee

My name is Peter Hainley and I am Executive Director of CASA of Oregon.

CASA of Oregon's mission is deeply rooted in service to farmworkers and other low-income populations throughout Oregon. We seek to improve the lives of Oregonians by building affordable housing, neighborhood facilities and programs that increase families' financial well-being. We are a nonprofit community development organization that works to support thriving communities by working with local organizations.

For more than 30 years, CASA has had at its core **service to farmworkers**. Whether it is providing housing in the community or helping farmers fix up their labor camps, our focus has always been on improving the lives of some of the most vulnerable members of our community.

CASA of Oregon is currently working with culturally specific organizations (CSOs) in the Rogue Valley in support of long term housing recovery efforts. While the CSOs we have been working with have been able to provide vouchers to displaced community members, one wonders what the situation would look like if these organizations had historically been given access to EHA and SHAP funding? Would the CSOs deep ties within their communities have ensured a much more robust response rather than reliance on others with less established ties within their communities?

HB 2001 -1 begins a process of shifting the power dynamic to CSOs by providing access to emergency housing and shelter funds as equal community partners rather than as subcontractors. A key aspect of this bill is lifting up community voices. And where appropriate, this bill will fund those CSOs. For those Community Action Agencies (CAAs) that already have established deep relationships with these CSOs, this bill is just more step in ensuring they are lifted up as equal partners.

This bill provides that *up to 20%..... may be used for local initiatives to address homelessness as determined by the Housing Stability Council (HSC)*. CAAs are eligible to access this 20%.

Since the adoption of the Statewide Housing Needs Plan by the HSC (and even preceding the adoption), the HSC has been a deliberative body that has focused intensely on racial justice issues and how OHCS removes barriers for BIPOC communities. It is accustomed to dealing with competitive applications for funding and consistently asks questions about whether programs and projects are serving the broader community. This bill will ensure that they continue that role with a much broader stakeholder group sitting at the table. Communities where CAAs and CSOs are working as equal partners will not see reductions in funding.

While the Housing Alliance has proposed a task force and additional funding (in lieu of the “up to 20%” carve out), CASA is only supportive of the Housing Alliance’s suggestion of a task force. A task force would ensure that racial equity is front and center. OHCS, working with the CAAs, CSOs, nonprofits, local government and others, will be compelled to better understand the local landscape of the homeless situation.

We feel that the communities will be better served if the homeless system begins now to adjust in supporting BIPOC communities in a more intentional fashion. We also believe that the 20% number is arbitrary and that eventually, 100% of the funds should be accessible to organizations on a competitive basis.

Thanks for the opportunity to show our support for HB 2001 -1. As mentioned above, we support the inclusion of a task force in this bill that will examine the homeless service funding system and structure, will prioritize and center racial equity and will seek to address racial disparities for people experiencing homelessness.