

March 27, 2025

Re: Support For HB 5011



Dear Chair Gomberg, Chair Woods and Members of the Committee:

My name is Sonia Capece, and I am writing on behalf of NeighborImpact to urge your strong support for HB 5011, particularly the components designed to increase homeownership and equally important maintain homeownership.

For most households in the United States, homeownership *is* affordable housing. If you were fortunate enough to purchase a typical Oregon home 20 years ago, your monthly mortgage payment is less than half of the market-rate rent for a 2-bedroom apartment in the same community.

We are confronting the following shared challenges:

- For every dollar Oregonians earned in wage increases between 2013 and 2022, the median sales price of a home increased by \$7.10.
- This crisis disproportionately impacts communities of color, with a 15 percent homeownership gap between white households and households who identify as Black, Indigenous, Hispanic/Latinx and other communities of color.
- Our state ranks 43rd in the nation for homeownership rates.

Homeownership is the key to building household stability, generational wealth and strong communities, yet it remains out of reach for far too many Oregon households. We're pushing for smart, people-focused investments and policies in 2025 that will make a meaningful difference in addressing our state's housing crisis.

We thank Governor Kotek for prioritizing general fund investments targeted to increase access to homeownership in her recommended budget. These proven homeownership programs will:

- Ramp up the production of entry-level homes statewide; and
- Increase access to homeownership, especially for first-time and first-generation homebuyers.

The following investments will increase entry-level homeownership supply:

- **POP 518: This \$16.9 million investment in the Homeownership Development Incubator Program** will expedite entry-level homeownership production by

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2303 SW First Street Redmond, OR 97756 • tel 541.548.2380 • fax 541.548.6013 • [www.neighborimpact.org](http://www.neighborimpact.org).



covering pre-development costs, including plans and permits; support construction of homes affordable to middle income households, earning 80-120 percent of the area median income (AMI); stimulate entry-level homeownership production in rural Oregon; and expand culturally responsive homeownership opportunities, including on sovereign tribal lands.

- **\$100 million in Article XI-Q Bond proceeds will support LIFT Homeownership**, expanding permanently affordable homeownership opportunities for Oregon households who earn up to 80 percent AMI. This program stimulates the rapid development of multi-home sites, with homes ready for sale within 36 months of receiving a funding reservation. Recent program improvements will ensure that this supply accelerator will function as intended to stimulate rural homeownership development, as well as denser urban developments.

The following POPs included in HB 5011 expand access to first-time and first-generation homeownership:

- **POP 522: \$30 million in Down Payment Assistance for Culturally Responsive and Rural Organizations** will enable organizations to open the door to homeownership for an estimated 1,100 first-time and first-generation homebuyers. During prior budget cycles, the state of Oregon relied on document recording fees to fund most of our state's down payment assistance. Due to the high interest rate environment and record-low real estate transactions, document recording fee receipts are at an all-time low. These general fund resources will ensure current service levels for down payment assistance.
- **The Oregon IDA Initiative** is another critical entry point for would-be Oregon homebuyers. We urge you to ensure stable, ongoing funding for this impactful matched savings and education program, as proposed in HB 2735 (or HB 3809).

POP 525 will **ensure homeowner stability** by providing \$2.5 million in funding for existing foreclosure prevention counseling providers. We are the regional Housing Counseling center for Central Oregon and have seen first hand how the foreclosure prevention programs are essential to proactively reduce the rate of increase of homelessness and ensure community stability by providing assistance to at risk homeowners when they need their community support the most.

We urge you to advance homeownership supply, access, and stability in the coming biennium through these targeted investments. **Together, we can open the doors to homeownership for thousands of Oregonians, close the racial wealth gap, and build a more equitable future for our state.**

Thank you for your consideration and service,

*Sonia Capece*

HomeSource Director