



HOUSING ALLIANCE

March 22, 2021

House Committee on Housing
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Chair Fahey, Vice-Chair Morgan, Vice-Chair Campos, Members of the Committee:

I am writing to you today on behalf of the Oregon Housing Alliance to express our support for 3184, which would fund a study of the need for a long-term rent assistance program in Oregon.

The Oregon Housing Alliance is a coalition of more than ninety organizations from all parts of the state. Our members have come together with the knowledge that housing opportunity is the foundation on which all of our success is built – individual success as students, parents, workers, and community members as well as the success of our communities. We represent a diverse set of voices including affordable housing developers, residents of affordable housing, local jurisdictions, and organizations working to meet basic needs in every corner of our state.

We believe that all Oregonians need a safe, stable, and affordable place to call home.

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, all of us have spent much more time in our homes. It has become the place where we work, learn, worship, and play. Home has always been essential, and this past year has showed us exactly how essential home is.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, we knew that already, too many seniors, families, and people who experience disabilities were paying too much of their income towards their rent or mortgage, and were experiencing other forms of housing instability. In Oregon, three out of four households with extremely low incomes pay over half of their income towards rent. When people pay a significant portion of their income towards rent, they have too little resources left over for food, medicine, utilities, and an emergency may mean they end up experiencing homelessness.

Long-term rent assistance is an effective strategy to prevent homelessness and provide an opportunity for affordable housing for people with low incomes around the state. However, existing resources are insufficient to meet the need. In 2018, approximately 47,000 households in Oregon received rent assistance through federal tenant based or project based vouchers.

These federal programs served one in four households that are eligible for these subsidies, meaning three in four households who are eligible for assistance did not receive it because of a lack of federal resources.

A recent study of long-term rent assistance¹ provided in Multnomah County found that people who received the assistance experienced: an increase in housing stability and the ability to age in place for seniors; improved financial stability; reduced stress and anxiety and improved mental health; and support to address physical health needs.

We need to continue to advance housing solutions for people with the lowest incomes in our communities, and work across the continuum of needs. Long term rent assistance can support families in accessing more choice in housing to live near work or school, and it can provide stability for seniors and people with disabilities who live on fixed incomes. Long term rent assistance can prevent displacement for people and families, and support them to stay in neighborhoods and communities they have lived in for years.

HB 3184 requests that the Legislature should fund a study to examine a long-term rental assistance program. This study should analyze costs to provide long term rent assistance with people experiencing housing instability across Oregon. We urge your support of HB 3184.

Thank you very much for your time, and for your service to our state.

Sincerely,



Alison McIntosh
On Behalf of the Oregon Housing Alliance

¹ https://www.nwpilotproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/CORE_LRA-Final-Report.pdf

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Housing Alliance Members

1000 Friends of Oregon
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Aging in the Gorge
Benton Habitat for Humanity
Bienestar
Bradley Angle
BRIDGE Housing
Business for a Better Portland
CASA of Oregon
Central City Concern
Chrismen Development
Church Women United of Lane County
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City of Hillsboro
City of Hood River
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City of Tigard
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College Housing Northwest
Community Action Partnership of Oregon
Community Action Team
Community Alliance of Tenants
Community Development Partners
Community Housing Fund
Community Partners for Affordable Housing
Community Vision
Cornerstone Community Housing
DevNW
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Enterprise Community Partners
Fair Housing Council of Oregon
Farmworker Housing Development Corp.
FOOD for Lane County
Habitat for Humanity of Oregon
Habitat for Humanity Portland/Metro East
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Home Forward
Homes for Good
Housing Authorities of Oregon
Housing Authority of Clackamas County
Housing Development Center
Housing Oregon
Human Solutions
Immigrant & Refugee Community Organization
Impact Northwest
Innovative Housing, Inc.
Interfaith Alliance on Poverty
JOIN
Lane County Health and Human Services
League of Oregon Cities
League of Women Voters of Oregon
Lincoln County
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Mainstream Housing Inc.
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Mid-Columbia Housing Authority
NAYA Family Center
Neighborhood Partnerships
NeighborImpact
NeighborWorks Umpqua
Network for Oregon Affordable Housing
Northwest Housing Alternatives
Northwest Pilot Project
Oregon AFSCME Council 75
Oregon Coalition of Christian Voices
Oregon Center for Public Policy
Oregon Coalition on Housing & Homelessness
Oregon Council on Developmental Disabilities
Oregon Food Bank
Our Children Oregon
Partners for a Hunger-Free Oregon
Portland Community Reinvestment Initiatives
Portland Homeless Family Solutions
Proud Ground
Raphael House
REACH CDC
Residents Organizing for Change (ROC Oregon)
Rogue Action Center
Rose CDC
St. Francis Shelter
St. Vincent de Paul of Lane County, Inc.
ShelterCare
Sisters Habitat for Humanity
Sponsors, Inc.
SquareOne Villages
Street Roots
Think Real Estate
Transition Projects
Washington County
Welcome Home Coalition