

My name is Margot Lavoie and I am a resident of Portland and a congregant at First Unitarian Church. I am also a part of the Leaven Community Land and Housing Coalition - an interfaith collective of more than 50 faith communities across Oregon devoted to using our land to build diverse affordable housing. One hundred percent of our congregations additionally serve unhoused and unstably housed people as core parts of our outreach services, from food pantries to rental support to advocacy.

I work for a local healthcare system and see first hand the toll that the lack of affordable housing takes on our patients. Houselessness makes it very difficult to manage chronic illness and this often leads to the development of serious health complications that could otherwise have been prevented. It is also very heartbreakng to see patients who have experienced a prolonged hospitalization due to a life-threatening illness or injury discharged back to life in a tent or a car or on the street. Despite the best efforts of our wonderful Social Service team, all too often there is just no available respite care or temporary housing to assist these patients during their recovery. Faith communities are often the safety net under the safety net. There is simply not enough we can do to save our communities and neighbors - many of them employed full-time - from houselessness, hunger, and mental health crises for which there are simply not enough resources.

This is clearly an enormous systemic gap that needs an immediate systemic bridge. The Governor's budget is one such bridge, and we are strongly in support of this important and immediate solution to our crisis and encourage you to do so as well.