

## **Testimony in Support of SB 603**

Chair Jama, Vice-Chair Anderson, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Tyler Mac Innis, Policy Analyst for the Oregon Center for Public Policy, and I respectfully submit this testimony in support of SB 603 with the -1 amendments on behalf of the Center.

The Oregon Center for Public Policy is a nonpartisan think tank dedicated to improving the economic outcomes for all Oregonians, particularly low-income families and Oregonians of color, through research and analysis.

SB 603 would create the People's Housing Assistance Fund Demonstration Program, which would provide \$1,000 monthly payments to about 1,000 Oregon households struggling to afford the rising costs of housing. The program would provide these households with unrestricted cash assistance to help them maintain stable housing and meet other basic needs.

We know the need for a program like this is great. Pre-pandemic, more than two in five Oregon households lacked the resources needed to afford the basics.<sup>1</sup> For many, housing is the most significant monthly expense. The vast majority of low-income renters spend more than 30 percent of their monthly income on housing.<sup>2</sup>

We also know from recent experience that cash works. At the federal level, policies such as the pandemic stimulus payments and expanded federal Child Tax Credit were essential to helping families navigate the economic uncertainty of the past few years. The federal Child Tax Credit, in particular, helped drive down child poverty to its lowest rate on record in 2021. We know from Census data that paying for housing was a primary way in which low-income Oregon households spent their expanded federal CTC dollars in 2021.<sup>3</sup>



A growing body of research confirms that unrestricted and unconditional cash – a guaranteed income – can transform the lives of those who receive it. Research shows that people are more economically stable, have improved physical and mental health outcomes, and in many cases have better employment outcomes, whether in terms of increased hours or securing a better paying job.<sup>4</sup>

Importantly, SB 603 would direct Portland State University's Homelessness Research and Action Collaborative to study the demonstration program and make recommendations to the state for a permanent, long-term cash assistance program. Such a study would serve as a roadmap for how Oregon could establish a guaranteed income, ensuring every Oregonian is more economically secure.

For the long-term economic stability of Oregonians, our state must look towards a guaranteed income. SB 603 provides a great opportunity to ensure greater economic and housing security for Oregonians struggling to get by today, while demonstrating how the state could scale up such a program. We urge you to support SB 603.

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<sup>1</sup> 44 percent of households lived below the ALICE Survivability Threshold in 2018, the most recent year with data. ALICE stands for asset limited, income constrained, employed. The ALICE Survivability Threshold is a measure of the minimum income needed to make ends meet. For more see [United for ALICE, ALICE in Oregon: A Financial Hardship Study](#), United Ways of the Pacific Northwest, 2020.

<sup>2</sup> Oregon Center for Public Policy, [Data for the People: Housing](#).

<sup>3</sup> Tyler Mac Innis, [The Oregon Kids' Credit would be a lifeline for hundreds of thousands of Oregon children](#), Oregon Center for Public Policy, 2023.

<sup>4</sup> Economic Security Project, [States Lead the Way](#), 2022