



## Service Employees International Union – Oregon State Council

March 2, 2023

Co-Chairs Sen. Aaron Woods & Rep. David Gomberg  
Joint Ways and Means, Transportation and Economic Development Subcommittee

***Re: Support for \$100 million in Emergency Rent Assistance Homelessness Prevention funds***

Dear Co-Chairs Woods and Gomberg, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this letter in **support of Senate Bill 5511, which will provide critical funding in the Oregon Housing and Community Services budget in order to prevent homelessness, rehouse people experiencing homelessness, and build and preserve more affordable housing units statewide.**

My name is Alberto Gallegos and I am submitting this letter of support on behalf of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), Oregon. SEIU Oregon is composed of SEIU Local 503 and SEIU Local 49, which together represent over 87,000 people. Local 49 represents private sector janitors, property service workers, light manufacturing, and healthcare workers; while Local 503 represents homecare workers, private nonprofit workers, in-home childcare providers, nursing home workers, and state and local government employees.

**Specifically, I submit this testimony in support of an investment of \$100 million in POP #90 for homelessness prevention funding.**

We believe that every Oregonian should be able to afford rent and have access to a place they call home without having to put in jeopardy their ability to pay for food, child care, transportation, health care, taxes, and other necessities. Unfortunately, Oregon has seen a 14.6% rent increase and there have been more than 2,000 eviction filings every month since the expiration of protections, which is a 43% increase over pre-pandemic levels. These rent increases have negatively impacted the homes and lives of our members; many of whom are low-income frontline workers and cannot afford these rent increases.

We are extremely grateful to Governor Kotek, legislative leadership, and this committee for recognizing the importance of moving swiftly with an urgent homelessness package to begin to address immediate needs.

\$100 million in funding for emergency rent assistance and eviction prevention to community action agencies and culturally specific programs across the state is an essential element of homelessness prevention. These funds are necessary because of our high rate of homelessness, low availability and high cost of rental housing, chronic disparities in homeownership, and the economic uncertainty that Oregon renters continue to live under. We are facing an extreme housing crisis in our state, with unprecedented levels of need in urban and rural areas across the state.



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Oregon is 4th in the nation of people per capita experiencing homelessness, according to the most recent national study<sup>1</sup>, which is not surprising as we also have the 4th lowest rental vacancy rate in the country<sup>2</sup> and renters pay the ninth highest rent in the country based on data from the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis and the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development<sup>3</sup>. Four in 10 Oregonians rent their homes. According to the state economist, more than 50% of Oregon renters do not have enough money left over for food, medicine, and basic necessities. That means too many Oregon families are living on the edge and are one missed paycheck, high health care or car repair bill, or other setback away from losing their housing. That plays out in Oregon eviction court rooms every day, where more than 86% of all court evictions are due to a missed rent payment. The situation is more serious for Black Oregonians, who are 30% less likely to be homeowners and more likely to be renters due to the legacy of historic policies that blocked Black people from purchasing and owning property in our state.<sup>4</sup>

Rental assistance keeps people housed, keeps families stable, keeps children in the classroom, and prevents homelessness. This is a smart investment today that will avoid higher human, financial, and societal costs later.

SEIU Oregon strongly urges the passage of \$100 million in emergency rental assistance and eviction prevention resources.

Thank you,

Alberto Gallegos  
Political and Government Relations Organizer  
SEIU Oregon State Council

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.opb.org/article/2021/03/19/federal-analysis-shows-oregons-homeless-population-in-decline-prior-to-pandemic/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://ipropertymanagement.com/research/rental-vacancy-rate#oregons-rental-vacancy-rate>

<sup>3</sup><https://www.kgw.com/article/news/local/oregon-rent-among-highest-in-country-according-to-new-report/283-ec40e58c-049f-4001-9cb5-eb2dd25ddbba>

<sup>4</sup><https://www.koin.com/news/oregon/the-black-homeownership-gap-in-oregon/>