

Moving Lives Forward.

www.metfamily.org

February 12, 2024

From: Judy Strand, CEO, Metropolitan Family Service

RE: Support HB 4070

February 13th, 2024

Support for Rent Assistance Investments to Prevent Homelessness

Dear Chair Jama, Vice-Chair Anderson, and members of the Senate Housing and Development Committee:

I am writing on behalf of Metropolitan Family Service (MFS) in support of SB 1530 which would provide vital rent assistance to community members who are at risk of losing housing. MFS, a nonprofit that has been in the community since 1950, partners with 18,000 people each year, in an effort *to help people get past the barriers of poverty, inequity and social isolation*. Eviction prevention is a central concern for many of the 18,000 community members who are active in our programs that operate in the Portland Metropolitan area. Access to rent assistance is a critical need given the fact that housing costs combined with other rising costs for other daily living needs have skyrocketed in recent years.

At MFS, we are in touch with many people of all ages who face serious economic challenges; wages are not keeping up with rising costs, and provision of other supports, such as food access, tax credit returns and help with budgeting and loan access are not enough to preserve housing for many people at this time. It is clear that housing costs remain a primary obstacle in making ends meet for many of our program participants.

SB 1530 increases investment in rental assistance and eviction prevention, which is a key prevention tool that supports stable housing for Oregonians. Oregon is among the states with the most cost-burdened renters in the nation. As a result, Oregon has one of the highest rates of homelessness in the nation.

With a sharp spike in high-rent homelessness, it's urgent that you invest in proven prevention strategies that keep Oregonians housed. At current levels of need, the funds previously allocated will be gone by July 2024. The legislature must fully fund the Stable Homes for Oregon package included in Fair Shot's People's Budget which has had a proven track record of keeping working Oregonians safe and stable.

Altogether, this package calls for:

- \$45 million in rent assistance through community action agencies and community-based organizations.
- \$6.5 million to the Urban League of Oregon for culturally specific housing stability services.
- \$6 million to the Home Fund at Oregon Worker Relief for housing stability services for immigrant Oregonians.
- \$2 million for outreach services for residents of expiring affordable housing units.



1010 SE Stark Street
Portland, OR 97214
phone 503.232.0007

Moving Lives Forward.

www.metfamily.org

86% of eviction filings are for nonpayment, against people who have fallen behind on their rent. There are close to 2000 eviction filings a month. The availability of rent assistance for tenants in the critical time of need will help ensure that landlords get paid, evictions are avoided, and most importantly, Oregonians stay housed.

Hardworking Oregonians are struggling to make ends meet, facing eviction and homelessness as a result. It is ten times less expensive to prevent homelessness than it is to respond to it. The People's Budget investments will keep people housed, while we continue to seek long-term solutions to end our housing and affordability crisis.

Thank you for your work on behalf of Oregonians. Please let me know if you have questions or wish to discuss this issue further. I can be reached at judys@mfs.email.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Judy Strand".

Judy Strand, CEO
Metropolitan Family Service