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February 28, 2023

Senator Kayse Jama
Chair, Senate Committee on Housing and Development
900 Court St NE, S-409
Salem, OR 97301

Re: Support for Senate Bill 603

Dear Chair Jama and Members of the Committee:

I write on behalf of both Home Forward and Home Forward's Resident Advisory Committee in strong support of Senate Bill 603, including the -1 amendment, which tests and studies a guaranteed income program. This program would support 1,000 households that qualify for, but do not receive other forms of housing assistance, by providing \$1,000 monthly payments for two years.

Home Forward is a Public Housing Authority (PHA) and the largest provider of affordable housing in the state of Oregon. We serve more than 15,500 Multnomah County low-income households by providing affordable housing, administering rent assistance, and providing supportive services. Our mission is to assure that the people of our community are sheltered. We own and manage over 6,000 homes throughout Multnomah County. We also provide households with services which range from youth supports to health and wellness. Meanwhile, we fund rent assistance for thousands of households residing in private unregulated housing that we do not directly oversee. We administer emergency rent assistance programs that benefit landlords and tenants alike, including Short Term Rent Assistance, the Landlord Compensation Fund, and the Landlord Guarantee Fund.

Home Forward's Resident Advisory Committee (RAC) is a body of members made up of residents and voucher participants and is co-chaired by the Resident Commissioner of the Home Forward Board of Commissioners. RAC members provide requested input and advice to the Board of Commissioners and Home Forward staff about policy changes and program development prior to review and decision-making. Finally, RAC members engage in internally guided advocacy of topics that benefit Home Forward residents and participants.

SB 603 provides a critical opportunity to pilot and study the impact of a guaranteed income program in Oregon to 1,000 households in need at a time when we have a housing and homelessness crisis. We know that the need for this program is great as evictions for nonpayment of rent have skyrocketed past prepandemic levels. As further evidence of the need for this type of program, when Home Forward opened its wait list for subsidized affordable housing in Multnomah County between November 30 and December 14, 2022, we received well over 9,000 applications. Until we can truly right size available housing resources to meet the demand, we must explore alternative ways to stabilize households. Through a guaranteed income program, participating households have the autonomy to make financial moves that benefit their long-term economic stability and respond to their individual circumstances.

In addition to stabilizing 1,000 households, SB 603 will provide valuable data for further planning and the hopeful expansion of a guaranteed income program. The Portland State University Homelessness Research and Action Collaborative (HRAC) will work closely with DHS to design, recruit for, and administer this demonstration program. HRAC will then study the outcomes and experiences of the program

participants, and issue two reports to the legislature on its findings. HRAC will also present recommendations on how the State of Oregon might structure and administer a long-term guaranteed income program, based on the experience of this demonstration program and a review of findings from similar programs across the nation.

Please support this innovative measure to directly support households that need and qualify for housing assistance, but due to a mismatch between resources and demand, are unstably housed, if housed at all. Thank you for the opportunity to testify. Please contact Christina Dirks, Interim Director of Policy and Planning, Home Forward at 503-348-1196, christina.dirks@homeforward.org or TomiRene Hettman Co-Chair, Home Forward Resident Advisory Committee at tomirene.hettman@homeforward.org regarding these comments.

Sincerely,

TomiRene Hettman

TomiRene Hettman
Co-Chair, Home Forward Resident Advisory Committee
Resident Commissioner, Home Forward Board of Commissioners



Christina Dirks
Interim Director of Policy and Planning
Home Forward