



March 29, 2021

Joint Subcommittee on Transportation and Economic Development
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Support for HB 5011

Co-Chair Beyer, Co-Chair Gomberg, and Members of the Committee,

I write to you today on behalf of Our Children Oregon in support of HB 5011, and the recommended budget for the Oregon Housing and Community Services (OHCS) Department for the 2021-2023 biennium.

Our Children Oregon's (OCO) mission is to be a voice and force for the common good for all Oregon children, ensuring all children have the resources and opportunities they need to reach their full potential. OCO is the result of the merger between two historic Oregon non-profits: The Children's Trust Fund of Oregon and Children First for Oregon. We elevate data and lived experience to prioritize children and center communities. We continue to connect a community of 115 advocates, coalitions, and organizations through The Children's Agenda, a legislative agenda championing equitable state legislative policies and shared investments to improving the lives of Oregon's children and their families.

Legislative concepts on the 2021 Children's Agenda that are supported by the OHCS budget include:

- Long term rent assistance for youth
- Strengthening the Oregon IDA initiative
- Promoting Racial Equity in Homeownership
- LIFT for Rental Housing and Homeownership

Long term rent assistance for youth

Oregon should invest at least \$4.5 million in the 2021-23 OHSC budget to provide long term rent assistance for youth experiencing homelessness, with an initial focus on youth exiting the foster care system, other institutional settings, or otherwise experiencing houselessness. We must do a better job supporting these young adults -

- Oregon has one of the highest rates of youth houselessness in the country
- One-third (33%) of unaccompanied youth experiencing houselessness were formerly in the foster care system
- Of these unaccompanied youth, 51% are Black, Indigenous,

The Children's Agenda

is a broad slate of equitable investments and policy solutions to meet the holistic needs of Oregon children, youth, and their families.



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and People of Color; of which 1 in 3 (34%) are Black youth

It is estimated that half of adults who are chronically houseless experienced houselessness as transition-aged youth.

Prior to the pandemic, high housing costs and rent burden in our state meant that youth were not being adequately served by existing rent assistance resources. COVID-19 has added new layers to this problem for youth exiting foster care and other institutional settings, who are more likely to be affected by the economic conditions that make it difficult to find and maintain housing. The pandemic has highlighted many of the gaps in our state's safety net to ensure housing stability for Oregon youth, and it is not a new issue. However, we can start to transform these outcomes through the Long-Term Rent Assistance program. By targeting one of the primary entry points into adult houselessness, Oregon can provide stability and support to youth as they transition to adulthood.

Strengthening the Oregon IDA initiative (2021 Children's Agenda priority)

We are working with other advocates to support HB 2551 to renew the tax credit which funds the Initiative to provide matched savings to Oregonians with low incomes. HB 5011 would support staffing at OHCS to support the Initiative. We also request a one-time \$7 million allocation in General Funds for the Oregon IDA Initiative for the 2021-23 biennium.

Promoting Racial Equity in Homeownership (2021 Children's Agenda priority)

OHCS is seeking \$2 million to provide expanded funding for staff to provide technical assistance and outreach to communities of color. Some strategies include: language access technical assistance, collaboration with culturally specific organizations, and outreach strategies targeted to communities of color. In addition to technical assistance, we support expansion of assistance with down payments for first time homebuyers with \$10 million in the OHCS budget.

LIFT for Rental Housing and Homeownership

Additional resources to develop regulated affordable housing are needed, including rental and homeownership opportunities. Since 2015, developers have successfully utilized general obligation bonds to build affordable housing through the Local Innovation and Fast Track, or LIFT Housing program. In 2021, the Legislature should commit \$250 million in Article XI-Q General Obligation bonds to this successful program for rental and homeownership units.

On behalf of the Our Children Oregon team,

Chris Coughlin, Policy, Advocacy, and Engagement Director

View the 2021 Children's Agenda at www.ourchildrenoregon.org/2021-childrens-agenda