



We build strength, stability, self-reliance and shelter.

February 16, 2026

To: House Committee on Revenue

Re: **Support for HB 4136**

Dear Chair Nathanson, Vice-Chair Reschke, Vice-Chair Walters and Members of the Committee:

My name is Shannon Tennant and I am the Executive Director of Habitat for Humanity of Oregon. On behalf of our organization and the 23 local Habitat for Humanity affiliates building and repairing homes across the state, we urge your strong support for House Bill 4136.

Habitat for Humanity of Oregon supports and leads public policy efforts that advance progressive housing systems change and increase homeownership access and stability for community members who have experienced disproportionate hurdles to stable and affordable housing. HB 4136 makes a meaningful investment in people and long-term stability by expanding access to homeownership for Oregonians seeking to buy their first home and put down roots in their communities.

When I purchased my first home in 2004, at the age of 29, I had been working at Salem's local Habitat for Humanity affiliate for five years—having transitioned to full-time employment after serving as a VISTA Volunteer. At the time I earned around \$40,000 a year. With very modest savings, an FHA loan, \$12,000 in down payment assistance through the Federal Home Loan Bank of Des Moines, and a \$5,000 bequest from my grandmother, I was able to purchase a newly constructed, 3-bedroom, 2-bathroom home near Minto Brown Island Park. The purchase price was under \$140,000.

According to Zillow, this home sold in 2023 for \$375,000. Today's "Zestimate" is \$407,200. Nonprofit salaries have not increased commensurately. Positions like the one I held in 2004 typically earn \$64,000 - \$80,000 today. It's little wonder that, as recently reported by the national realtors' association, the average age of first-time homeowners across the nation is now 40 years old.

Is there someone you know under the age of 40 who aspires to plant deep roots in their community and escape ever escalating monthly rent costs? Unless an aspiring first-time homebuyer has access to generational wealth or huge earning power, it will likely take layered down payment assistance to help them achieve their goal.

HB 4136 makes an extremely narrow and targeted adjustment to Oregon's mortgage interest deduction to ensure ongoing funding for the life-affirming opportunity of homeownership. Eliminating

the second home deduction will free up \$9-\$10 million each year for down payment assistance. These resources will assist an estimated 250 first-time and first-generation homebuyers each year.

Down payment assistance is one of the most effective and well-documented tools for expanding access to homeownership. In the last biennium, Oregon Housing and Community Services partnered with nonprofit homeownership providers to distribute more than \$22 million in down payment assistance, helping over 600 first-time and first-generation buyers purchase homes. Every participant completed HUD-certified homebuyer education and counseling, supporting long-term housing resiliency. Many of these households served were families of color and first-generation buyers who have historically faced systemic barriers to homeownership.

Despite these proven outcomes, down payment assistance programs currently lack a stable and dedicated funding source. HB 4136 helps address this gap by directing approximately \$9–10 million per year to support this critical investment in our neighbors and communities.

This proposal reflects a thoughtful realignment of public resources toward households who will live in these homes year-round, contribute to their local economies, and put down deep roots in Oregon communities of all sizes. It's a practical investment in household stability, economic resilience, and community strength.

I respectfully urge you to support HB 4136 and help expand sustainable pathways to homeownership.

Thank you for your dedicated leadership and service,



Shannon M. Tennant, Executive Director