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Nkenge Harmon Johnson - Urban League of Portland

Erica Mills - NeighborWorks Umpqua

Hai Nguyen - East County Housing (CDC of Oregon)

Sheila Stiley - NW Coastal Housing

March 26, 2025

Re: Strong Support for SB 829 with Amendments – Affordable Housing Insurance Reform

Chair Pham, Vice-Chair Anderson, and Members of the Senate Committee on Housing and Development:

My name is Kevin Cronin, Director of Policy and Advocacy at **Housing Oregon**, a statewide coalition representing over 125 mission-driven affordable housing organizations, homeownership developers, homeless service providers, and their support networks, including banks, architects, and contractors. We write in **strong support of SB 829 and its amendments** to address Oregon's escalating insurance crisis—a top priority for our members.

Insurance challenges are not unique to affordable housing, but they disproportionately threaten our mission. For example:

- **Central City Concern**, a frontline shelter and housing provider, faced a **500% premium increase** (as reported by *The Oregonian*), diverting funds from critical services.
- **Northwest Housing Alternatives** saw insurance costs rise from **10% to 40%** of operating budgets, forcing cuts to staff and resident support.
- **Surplus lines market barriers** delay coverage for affordable properties, as insurers increasingly redline Portland metro areas and properties serving vulnerable populations.

The bill's three-pronged approach offers immediate relief and long-term solutions:

1. **\$5 Million Premium Relief Program:** Mitigates rate hikes for regulated affordable housing, shelters, and Project Turnkey sites. *This is a lifeline, not a cure.*
2. **Export List for Surplus Lines:** Expedites access to non-admitted insurers, fostering competition in a strained market.
3. **DCBS Study:** Explores innovative solutions, such as:
 - A state reinsurance program (modeled after CA, FL, and TX).
 - Anti-discrimination protections for affordable housing operators.
 - Unified coverage for syndicated investments.
 - *We urge DCBS to leave no stone unturned.*

While SB 829 won't solve this crisis overnight, it is a **critical first step** to stabilize Oregon's affordable housing stock. We urge your support and stand ready to collaborate on future reforms. Thank you for your leadership.

Sincerely,
Kevin Cronin
Director of Policy & Advocacy
Housing Oregon