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March 27, 2025

Co-Chairs Woods and Gomberg, and Members of the Joint Subcommittee On Transportation and Economic Development,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on both FHDC and Evolve in support of HB 5011. The Oregon Housing and Community Services (OHCS) department supports key investments in eviction prevention and rehousing services. FHDC has more than 30+ years' experience in both development and Property Management. In 2016, FHDC formed Evolve Workforce & Multifamily Housing Services, a non-profit property management company that provides culturally specific training and services in rural Oregon.

Thank you to OHCS both FHDC and Evolve have been able to provide not only decent, healthy and safe housing but include supportive services, now with Evolve creation, we have been able to trained low-income individuals in a profession that can provide a path to move out of the cycle of multigenerational poverty.

Both FHDC and Evolve are statewide network of community-based organizations striving to solve the exclusionary impacts faced by our community by providing direct support and building systems that support mutual prosperity for all.

Today, I would like to call your attention to the \$3 Million Dollars the agency is requesting to support culturally responsive property management services, below some of the points of the importance of it.

### **Addressing Systemic Barriers**

Communities of color in Oregon face numerous challenges in accessing and maintaining housing, including language barriers and systemic discrimination. Our services include bilingual applications and staff to support recertification, maintenance, and resource navigation. As an organization, we serve predominantly rural agricultural and workforce families, where accessing culturally specific services is more difficult due to socioeconomic factors, poverty, population density, and travel distances.

### **The Role of Culturally Responsive Property Management**

Evolve is a non-profit organization dedicated to providing culturally specific and responsive PM services for predominantly farmworker and low-income working families. Our approach includes a workforce training component that has proven effective in staff retention and resident satisfaction, with employees remaining between 6 to 10 years—significantly longer than the industry average of 2 years.

Our trained staff understand and represent the communities they serve, fostering trust that leads to timely rent payments, reduced criminal activity, care for the property's physical well-being, low eviction rates, and engagement with the vast resident services and enrichment offered on-site. These outcomes positively impact the financial health and community well-being within affordable housing properties.

## Economic Opportunities and Community Impact

Culturally specific PM services not only address unique needs such as language and communication but also create economic opportunities for vulnerable populations. Many Evolve staff members have backgrounds as farmworkers or come from farmworker families. By training farmworkers to become property managers, we also enable them to not only access stable housing but also stable jobs, access to assets, and opportunities to break the cycle of intergenerational poverty.

## Demonstrated Success

Our approach has yielded tangible results:

- **Rent Collections and Occupancy rates are 98%, compared with 94% in Metro Areas.**
- **Evictions:** In 2024, we conducted only 5 legal evictions, representing 0.2% of our total population, well below Oregon's average rate at 4%.

Implementing culturally responsive PM services requires additional effort and dedication. We cannot achieve this without your support. We urge you to support Senate Bill 51, to ensure that our housing policies and management are inclusive and equitable for all Oregonians.

We urge you to support OHCS budget and its critical investments, thank you for your consideration.

In solidarity,

**Maria Elena Guerra (MEG), MPA (She, Her, Hers, Ella)**

Executive Director

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## Alianza Poder Network:

PCUN

Latinos Unidos Siempre

Mujeres Luchadoras Progresistas

Centro de Servicios Para Campesinos

Mano a Mano Family Center

Salem Keizer Coalition for Equality

KTUP 98.3FM Radio Poder

Capaces Leadership Institute

Farmworker Housing Dev. Corp.

Evolve Workforce and Multifamily Housing Services



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