

Submitter:

Erin Meechan

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On Transportation and Economic Development

Measure, Appointment HB5011
or Topic:

Re: Support for HB 5011 and POPs 504 and 505 Homelessness Prevention Resources

Co-Chairs Woods and Gomberg, and Members of the SubCommittee:

My name is Erin Meechan and I am a resident in Gresham and a Housing Stability Council Member with OHCS.

I am writing in strong support of Policy Option Packages 504 and 505, the Homelessness Prevention Package in the Oregon Housing and Community Services Agency Budget. These POPs will allocate \$173.2 million to ensure continuity of emergency rent assistance and community-based and culturally specific services designed to prioritize prevention of eviction and homelessness in communities across the state.

Housing is a human basic need and people do not function without safe, stable shelter. The fight or flight response is real. Everyday is a struggle as you plan where and what to eat, personal hygiene, clean clothes and then you do it again the next day. The effects on your mental and emotional state leaves nothing else for work, school, and most healthy interactions that people need to be successful, learn and function in society. It has taken years for myself and children to settle in after being displaced over and over again. It has taken years for our family to truly function.

The eviction interventions make a difference for thousands of Oregonians. Keeping people who are housed is a must. Emergency rent assistance immediately stops the flow of families into homelessness. Typically, households need help just once to regain stability. This program, combined with other supportive services, can prevent the spiraling cycle of homelessness and its resulting physical, economic, and psychological trauma, which takes years to overcome.

Oregon renters are the 5th most cost burdened in the nation, and our eviction crisis is growing with more than 27,000 cases filed last year. Approximately 88% of evictions are because tenants cannot afford Oregon's high rents. As housing costs rise, more families are being pushed into crisis. Oregon families are on the brink, and we must act now with real solutions.

Replenish funding for proven eviction prevention programs provided by local community organizations that understand local needs, including community action agencies and culturally specific service providers. \$173.2 Million

Emergency rent assistance to prevent homelessness: \$109M is the minimum amount of rent assistance necessary to prevent evictions over the next two years. These funds are distributed by community action agencies and community-based and trusted organizations across the state.

Homelessness prevention services: \$63.2M to support housing navigation services, landlord tenant education and outreach, legal services, tenant supports, eviction prevention, tenant advocacy, and rapid rehousing services.

Hopelessness in our communities is a direct result of high rents, low wages, lack of affordable homes and this is a slippery slope into a downward spiral. I see it and I have felt it. We must support HB 5011 and POP 504 and 505 to fund vital emergency rental assistance and homelessness prevention services that keep Oregonians housed and supported now.

We can't afford to wait. High rents are pushing more and more families into crisis. Every day we delay means more Oregon families losing their housing. Our lawmakers must act now to protect our communities, support our providers, and ensure every Oregonian has a stable framework to build their future.
I urge you to support HB 5011 and I thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony and for your service to Oregon communities.

Sincerely,

Erin Meechan