

February 12, 2025

Senate Committee on Housing and Development
900 Court Street NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

RE: Senate Bill 949 - Support for Mixed-Use Affordable Housing Development in North Portland

Chair Pham, Vice-Chair Anderson, and Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on Senate Bill 949, which would require the Oregon Housing and Community Services Department to develop a mixed-used affordable housing development project to provide 664 new affordable housing units in the North and Northeast Portland areas.

Multnomah County supports SB 949 because it will provide much-needed affordable housing in historically Black neighborhoods that have been impacted by gentrification. According to the 2024 report published by the National Low Income Housing Coalition, Portland Metro Area has a 56,972 deficit of affordable housing units; with 25 available and affordable units per 100 extremely low income renter households. This is worse than the state average which is 27. Oregon generally has the 7th worst ranking in the nation for lack of affordable and available rental housing and 78% of extremely low-income renters have a severe rental cost burden. Data also shows that Black individuals and families disproportionately experience homelessness and poverty. By creating 664 new affordable housing units in historical Black neighborhoods SB 949 can help address racial and economic disparities in our community. The creation of mixed-use developments with community services, commercial spaces, and residential units, through SB 949, will enable residents to make meaningful choices about housing and long-term services and supports that allow them to fully participate in the community.

The JOHS works with community-based organizations and government entities to provide participant-driven, coordinated, and equity-based services focused on those who are experiencing homelessness or at risk of becoming homeless in Multnomah County. We know that the leading factor causing people to experience homelessness is because of a lack of affordable and available housing. Without the immediate expansion of affordable housing in our community, we will see rising numbers of people experiencing homelessness, which greatly impacts the work of the JOHS. In addition, a core function of the JOHS is to expand the number of Permanent Affordable Housing units in our community

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for our most vulnerable neighbors including individuals experiencing chronic homelessness with a disability. SB 949 will provide some of the affordable housing needed to do this critical work.

The JOHS will continue to work in partnership with the Oregon Department of Housing and Community Services to support SB 949 and ensure Multnomah County residents experiencing homelessness or are at risk of homelessness have housing and services that meet their needs and allow them to thrive.

Thank you for considering our comments on Senate Bill 949. We respectfully request your support to advance the bill to the Joint Committee on Ways and Means.

Sincerely,

Alyssa Plesser
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Joint Office of Homeless Services

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