



Testimony About HB 3462

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Good morning Chair Dexter, Vice-Chairs Gamba and Helfrich, and members of the committee. My name is Erika Bucio, I am a Community Organizer at Unite Oregon, working and living in the Rogue Valley region. Our organization is led by black, indigenous, people of color, immigrants and refugees, rural communities, and people experiencing poverty. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 3462, Emergency Housing for All, which ensures fair and safe emergency housing for communities like ours in the case of natural disasters, like the wildfires. The intent of this bill is to ensure that community members, traditionally left out of emergency response, have access to emergency resources and housing maintained at Fair Housing standards. It also calls for the Office of Emergency Management to ensure all community members are supported when FEMA requirements make certain impacted community members, workers, and families ineligible for federal resources.

In September of 2020, many community organizers were on the ground helping community members access resources. We turned out at shelters and joined FEMA folks to serve as interpreters for families who only spoke Spanish. We also brought plastic containers for members to put their belongings in as they gathered resources from donation spots, instead of the flimsy trash bags they had collected. Despite how hard we worked to support our communities, what they needed was housing. We saw people turned away for all different reasons, sometimes because they spoke Spanish, other times because they did not have proper documentation whether it was lost in the fire or unaccepted due to being part of a mixed-status household. And even when folks were temporarily housed, the quality of housing was terrible. Months, and now years later, we see these same families impacted by the same issue and struggling to be okay.

We have been in communication with our partners at the Office of Emergency Management, community housing leaders, and climate justice partners, and we all agree; this legislation addresses a critical gap in emergency housing efforts and is essential to ensuring that what we build is fair, equitable, and accessible for everyone. Emergency Housing for All offers an opportunity to apply and enforce Fair Housing standards to folks experiencing displacement during a state of emergency, especially those traditionally left out of emergency response efforts. Alerting people of resources available to them, their right to quality support, and ensuring they have access to information in multiple languages, without discrimination, must be a critical component of Oregon's emergency response planning.

Without this support, we already know that many of our folks will be left out again the next time a disaster hits. This is something that Oregon's rural communities just can't afford. HB 3462 will help keep people in livable spaces, avoid second wave evacuations, and uplift resource sharing with community members during times of need. Our communities, our migrant farmworkers, our workforce and their families need to hear that in times of crisis like the wildfires, they are not forgotten, that they will be supported by the communities in which they live and work. I urge you to support of HB 3462. Thank you.