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Testimony in Support of HB 2417
Human Services and Housing Committee – March 6, 2013
Submitted by: John Miller, Oregon Opportunity Network

Chair Tomei, Vice-Chair Gomberg, and Members of the Committee:

The Oregon Opportunity Network (Oregon ON) respectfully submits this written testimony in support of HB 2417. Funds raised through HB 2417 will provide emergency rent assistance to help veterans either prevent or end homelessness, will finance the building or rehabilitation of housing for veterans, and will provide downpayment assistance for veterans ready to take the step to homeownership.

HB 2417 will increase an existing document recording fee passed in 2009 (HB 2436) by \$5. This would increase the fee charged on the first page of real estate related recordings. Funds raised through this fee will go to work across the range of housing needs for veterans. The existing document recording fee funds have had a critical impact on the housing delivery system in Oregon, including multifamily housing development and homeownership – but these resources come nowhere near meeting the need for affordable housing around the state. With reductions in federal funding and economic hardship in communities across Oregon, additional resources are needed to ensure that struggling Oregonians have a place to call home. Targeting new resources to veterans is a smart investment by the State that will help our veterans return with dignity and leverage the federal resources they are entitled to.

Oregon ON member organizations include nonprofits and housing authorities around the state who are working on the front lines to support struggling Oregonians through multifamily and homeownership opportunities as well as rental assistance and supportive services. Examples of our members' work to support veterans include:

- [St. Vincent de Paul in Eugene](#) is part of the Veterans' Housing Project, a collaborative effort of private, public and nonprofit organizations to provide safe and affordable housing to assist military men and women transition easily back into the community upon returning from deployment.
- [REACH Community Development in Portland](#) recently opened Gray's Landing, with 42 apartments are set aside for very low-income veterans.
- The [Housing Authority of Washington County](#) is one of several Oregon ON members who provide Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH), rental assistance vouchers specifically targeted to homeless veterans. Public housing authorities work closely with Veteran Affairs Medical Centers to manage the program. In addition to the rental assistance, VA Medical Centers provide supportive services and case management to eligible homeless veterans.

Oregon's Veterans deserve a comprehensive plan which addresses all of their needs—from supportive housing for people returning with disabilities or injuries, to rent assistance to help prevent or end homelessness to assistance in buying their first home. We urge you to support HB 2417. Thank you very much for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of this important bill.