

To: Representative Carolyn Tomei  
RE: Agriculture Workforce Housing Tax Credit – HB2980  
Human Services and Housing Committee, March 8, 2013

I am writing to ask for your support of [HB2980](#), with chief sponsors Rep. Bailey and Sens. Thomsen and Dingfelder. This bill extending the Farmworker Housing tax credit is very similar to HB2474/SB323 other than changing the name to Agriculture Workforce. The bill currently has a total of 26 sponsors.

There are three key reasons why this tax credit serves an important public purpose and deserves extension:

1. It helps provide stable workforce to support our \$5 billion agricultural economy.
2. It leverages Federal and private investment, resulting in a net economic benefit to the State.
3. It provides safe, decent affordable housing for the families who put food on our tables.

A variety of tools and strategies are needed to create affordable housing opportunities in Oregon communities. The Farm Worker Housing Tax Credit – renamed in the bill the Agriculture Workforce Housing Tax Credit, to reflect accurately who it serves – has been a proven and effective part of the “toolkit” since 1989.

Over the past decade, the credit has helped create more than 1,200 housing units in 17 counties around Oregon. Who benefits from this credit?

- Farmworkers (and their families) benefit from safe, decent, affordable housing. Housing gives people an opportunity to build better lives
- Farmers receive a tax credit to help offset the cost of building on-farm housing; they increase efficiency and production, which benefits the economy
- Nonprofit developers of community-based housing are better able to provide safe, decent affordable housing
- State resources are leveraged by federal grants and loans, private investment
- Local economies benefit from the economic stimulus of housing construction and rehabilitation as well as a more stable local work force and communities

Our communities are better and stronger when we have safe, stable and affordable housing for all our residents. We don't have enough safe, decent and affordable housing for our agricultural workforce - we know that we are meeting only a small percentage of the need statewide. This leaves families and workers sleeping in cars, under bridges, or in fields. Or, it means that growers don't have workforce available when the crops are ripe.

Safe, decent housing means fewer people are homeless or in humane conditions. Children's success in school and life is tied to having a stable home. Please support HB 2980 and extend the Agriculture Workforce Housing Tax Credit.

Thank you,

Kathy Kniep, Interim Executive Director