



Community And Shelter Assistance Corp.

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To: Members of the Human Services Committee

February 5, 2015

RE: Technical Corrections to ORS 307.480-307.505

Dear Chari Keny-Guyer and Members of the Committee:

Please accept this testimony in support of HB 2610.

When the Legislature modified the language in ORS 307.480 – 307.505 in 2013 which effectively put the responsibility of obtaining certification for fire, safety and health of agricultural workforce housing units on the owner of the housing rather than the county assessor, the language did not include who would provide certification of the units. HB 2610 provides those technical changes.

We are here today on behalf of these non profit property owners. When they submitted their applications for property tax exemption in April of last year, as they do every year, they were informed that OSHA did not have jurisdiction over their properties and would not be inspecting the units or providing the certification. This was a bit of a surprise and deeply concerning to the owners. It was the first year they had to acquire the certifications from OSHA and the Fire Marshall themselves and they did not completely understand the situation.

These non profit owners build and finance agricultural workforce housing on margins and are dependent on the property tax exemption to maintain affordability for agricultural workers, who on average earn \$19,000 per year for a family of four.

The basis of HB 2610 is to change the certification requirement from OSHA and the Fire Marshall to the property owners themselves. To finance the properties, non-profit owners typically are awarded federal, state and private resources, each of which requires the property be built to local, state and federal building codes. They also require the owner maintain those units at a minimum to the Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Housing Quality Standard, which covers all safety issues for the occupants. Typically the units are inspected every three to five years.

We held meetings with OSHA, the Fire Marshall, DOR, and property owners to discuss the existing problem and the appropriate solution. All agreed that HB 2610, with the proposed amendment, will accomplish that goal.

We urge you to pass HB 2610.

Sincerely,

Lisa Rogers
Deputy Director



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