



**Bill Hall  
County Commissioner**

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**TESTIMONY BY COMMISSIONER BILL HALL, APRIL 8, 2015**

Chair Johnson, Chair Gomberg, and members of the Committee:

I am Bill Hall, a County Commissioner from Lincoln County, and an active participant in efforts to address the need for housing opportunity in Oregon.

I'd like to ask you to travel back in time with me for just a moment: One of the rituals of my childhood, and I suspect of many of yours as well, was the annual viewing of the Wizard of Oz on network TV. We all remember Dorothy's classic line: "There's no place like home." That was true then, in that faraway place, and it's true right here and now.

Lincoln County is a member of the Housing Alliance, which is a coalition of more than sixty organizations from all parts of the state. Housing Alliance members have come together with the knowledge that there really IS no place like home, because housing opportunity is the foundation on which all of our success is built – individual success as students, parents, workers, and community members as well as the success of our communities. Our investments in improving early childhood, coordinated health care and in many other areas will not succeed without it.

We have grand visions for building a better Oregon, the place we all cherish and the place we all call home. We know that our success in meeting the goals we set for our families and residents start with having homes to wake up in and return to at night.

I am here today to offer our strong and enthusiastic support for the proposed investment of \$100 million into affordable housing. An investment this biennium of \$100 million into the development of new housing opportunities for families living on very low incomes, especially those who may be at risk of homelessness, is an important first step toward securing Oregon's future.



\$100 million will help us work together to begin to meet the statewide need of 50,000 new places to call home for Oregonians with lower incomes; it will set in motion work to meet other essential housing needs; it will allow us to test new partnerships and approaches across the range of Oregon communities.

In addition to creating homes, providing stability, and smoothing the path to individual and family success, investing in homes creates jobs, strengthens communities, and improves our ability to meet state policy goals in education, health, and economic opportunity.

In Lincoln County we see overwhelming need for housing. Our workers travel many miles over narrow, dangerous roads between jobs and home that they can afford. Our students are challenged to learn over the course of a school year when they face displacement and their families are consumed by economic stresses. One in ten – ONE IN TEN – of the students in our school district experienced homelessness last year. Our businesses can't attract good employees or they lose them because housing is not available at a manageable cost.

We have taken many steps locally to create organizational infrastructure and to develop as wide a variety of tools to meet housing needs as possible. We are especially excited that this new state resource could be flexible enough to support innovative approaches and partnerships, such as the small housing with services property we helped open for people coming out of homelessness, and the land trust we launched several years ago to secure land for housing development. We cannot do all of this work without state investment, but we stand ready to do the necessary work locally to make this investment pay dividends for Oregon.

Thank you for your service, and thank you for your support of housing opportunity. Above all, remember: There's no place like home.





## **Oregon needs innovative approaches to meet growing housing needs**

### **\$100 million needed for affordable housing**

Oregon Housing Authorities (OHA), the statewide association of public housing authorities, strongly supports the proposed bonding package that will allocate \$100 million for Oregon Housing and Community Services (OHCS) to develop new affordable housing units. As both administrators of the Section 8 program, and as owners and developers of affordable housing, we know first-hand the dire need for this resource across the State of Oregon. There are communities in Deschutes, Linn, Benton and Jackson County where securing a low-cost rental unit is virtually impossible. Throughout the state, too many families are rent-burdened, meaning they spend more than a third of their income on rent. The lack of affordable housing increases homelessness and displacement for low-income families and their children.

### **Community benefits to housing stability**

Everyone needs a safe place to call home. We know that children are more successful in school and have better health when their housing is stable. We know that families can better manage their health when they are not burdened with rents that exceed a third of their income. Currently, too many families must choose between paying their rent, their bills, or buying food and medicine. In such situations, there is no right choice. Increasing the state's supply of affordable housing in all settings –rural, urban and suburban, will help make rents better fit their household budget.

### **Our commitment to make it work**

OHA will work in partnership with OHCS to help develop a comprehensive investment strategy for the \$100 million that will best meet the needs of low-income Oregonians. Our goal will be to have these funds leverage federal programs and federal funding including HUD's Rental Assistance Demonstration program, the preservation of public housing, project based Section 8 and other resources managed by OHA members. The resources and needs of OHA members are unique and OHCS will need to deliberately factor in these opportunities and challenges as it puts together a thoughtful investment strategy. Further, these funds have an opportunity to be flexible and adaptable to the unique and dynamic nature of the real estate market in communities across the great state of Oregon.



## **Who we are**

The 22 agencies of Oregon Housing Authorities (OHA) are committed to providing safe and affordable housing to Oregonians facing income, disability or other life challenges.

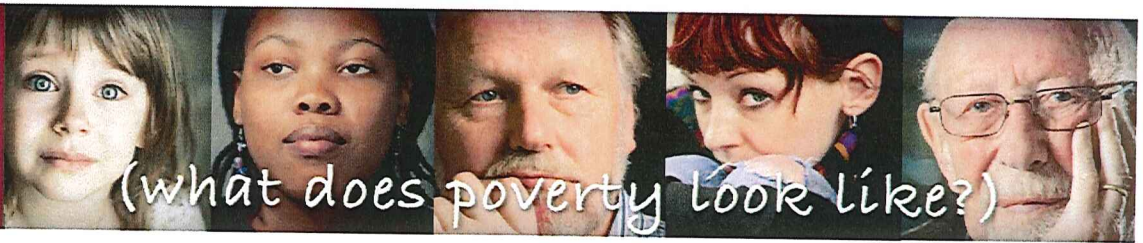
We believe children, seniors, and people with disabilities need a place to call home in order to be healthy and successful in life. Our members work collaboratively to bring increased visibility and a united voice for affordable housing to Oregon.

## **Rental assistance**

- OHA delivers rental assistance to 33,600 low-income Oregon households.
- We own and manage more than 5,500 units of public housing for low-income families, seniors and people with disabilities.
- We give more than 36,000 children a place to call home
- Every year, housing authorities distribute more than \$176 million in rental assistance payments to 12,800 private landlords throughout Oregon.

## **Development**

Oregon Housing Authorities have built and acquired more than 10,400 units of affordable housing throughout the state and currently have more than 1,300 new units in the development pipeline. We work with public and private partners to finance and build affordable housing that fits communities and boosts local economies. We believe the dream of quality, sustainably-built affordable housing can be best achieved by partnership and the successful leveraging of local, state and federal funding resources.



Oregon's Poverty Fighting Network

CAPO Members

ACCESS

Clackamas County Social Services

Community Action Organization

Community Action Program  
of East Central Oregon

Community Action Team

Community Connection  
of Northeast Oregon

Community in Action CAA

Community Services Consortium

Klamath-Lake Community Action  
Services

Lane County Human Services  
Commission

Mid-Columbia Community Action  
Council

Mid-Willamette Valley Community  
Action Agency

Multnomah County Department of  
County Human Services

NeighborImpact

Oregon Coast Community Action

Oregon Human Development Corp.

United Community Action Network

Yamhill Community Action Partnership

CAPO Board Officers

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Vice President: Donna Bowman

Secretary/Treasurer: Barb  
Higinbotham

Past President: Brenda Durbin

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CAPO Executive Director

Tom Clancey-Burns

Community Action Partnership  
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To: Co-Chair Johnson; Co-Chair Gomberg; Members of the Joint  
Transportation and Economic Development Subcommittee of Ways  
and Means

From: Jim Tierney, President Community Action Partnership of Oregon

April 8, 2015

RE: Proposal to allocate \$100 million toward developing affordable  
housing throughout Oregon

The Community Action Partnership of Oregon (CAPO) represents all 18  
Community Action programs in the state. Our agencies cover the entire  
state, including Oregon Human Development Corporation, the statewide  
Community Action program for farmworkers. This statewide focus gives us  
a unique perspective on both the variability and the consistency of need for  
affordable housing across Oregon. **It is this perspective that leads us to  
offer our strong support for the proposed allocation of \$100 million to  
develop more affordable rental units across the state.**

Our agencies' Homeless Assistance staffs have been case managing  
homeless and near homeless individuals and families since the  
homelessness crisis came upon us in the late 1980s. These committed  
staffs weave a tapestry of state and federal funding, local charitable  
donations, positive landlord relationships and local partnerships into a  
network that supports the transition from homelessness to housed.

In some of our communities, the lack of any available rental housing units  
is the most significant barrier. Central Oregon has a rental vacancy of less  
than one percent. Although not that low, the Portland Metro area is rapidly  
approaching the same crisis. In other communities, economies of scale  
dictate that housing appropriate to various special needs is unavailable. In  
all of our communities, there are insufficient service dollars to house the  
homeless individuals and families we meet every day. For example, in  
Northwest Oregon housing case managers turn away six families of every  
seven seeking assistance. In such an inadequate funding environment, it is  
critical that we both increase available resources and give these dedicated  
case managers the tools they need to find innovative solutions for the  
needs of their homeless clients.

