



House Bill 5005

Joint Committee on Ways and Means, Subcommittee on Capital Construction

May 8, 2015

Co-Chair Read, Co-Chair Girod, and members of the Subcommittee on Capital Construction thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony on HB 5005 in support of allocating \$100 million in General Obligation Bonds for affordable housing. My name is Kevin Christiansen and I am the Government Affairs Director for the Oregon Bankers Association (OBA). The OBA represents the depository banks operating in the State of Oregon. Currently, there are 51 FDIC-insured banks doing business in Oregon, 25 of which are headquartered in the state. The principal mission of the OBA is to be the voice of Oregon banking and to support the opportunity for banks of all sizes to be viable and successful in order to meet the financial services needs of their diverse customers and communities across the State of Oregon.

Over the years, the Oregon Bankers Association (OBA) and its member banks have been very active in working with our housing partners with respect to affordable housing issues. For example, in 1990 OBA helped create the Network for Oregon Affordable Housing (NOAH) which provides financing and technical assistance for affordable housing development in the state. Another example is OBA's work with the National Association of REALTORS in creating the Home Sweet Home Program, which helped provide homeownership opportunities for hundreds of low and moderate income Oregonians earning less than 80% of the median income.

The lack of affordable housing is an acute problem in the state of Oregon. Too many families facing economic hardship have too few affordable housing options. Oregon Housing and Community Services (OHCS) reports that "175,000 Oregon households survive on extremely low incomes, but our state only has 48,000 rental homes available at the right rent levels for these families". The United States Conference of Mayors recently released its 2014 Hunger and Homelessness Survey. The survey found that a lack of affordable housing is driving homelessness among families and individuals.¹ It is important to note that the affordable housing shortage is not isolated to a few communities, but is a problem throughout the state.

The Oregon Legislature has an opportunity this session to make a meaningful difference in reducing the shortage of affordable housing in Oregon. The proposal from OHCS to provide \$100 million in bonding is an important step. These resources would give OHCS and its partners the tools to create affordable housing opportunities and alleviate some of the housing challenges faced by too many of our fellow citizens. We recognize housing is fundamental to families building a healthy and successful future.

OBA encourages the committee to include the above-referenced bonding authority in HB 5005. Thank you for the opportunity to provide input with respect to this important issue.

¹ US Conference of Mayors, "Hunger and Homelessness Survey", December 2014, <http://www.usmayors.org/pressreleases/uploads/2014/1211-report-hh.pdf>.