

**To: Human Services & Housing Committee**

**From: Russ Dondero, 1506 Limpus Lane, Forest Grove, OR**

**February 1, 2016**

***Testimony in support of HB 4001***

**Dear Chair [Alissa Keny-Guyer](#) and members of the Committee**

### **Washington County's Housing Crisis**

Like the rest of Oregon, we have an affordable housing crisis in Washington County that needs a variety of public/private partnerships to address the needs of the vulnerable in our community.

**HB 4001** will give us the financial tools to respond to this crisis and **IZ** the ability to open the local housing market to affordable housing for low-income Oregonians in the 50% or below MFI...

Here's the facts on Forest Grove where I've lived for 42 years.

#### **Forest Grove's Housing Crisis:**

- 21% of FG residents live below the poverty line;
- 57% of public school students in FG get free or reduced lunches;
- 40% of all employment in Washington County is in "lower wage" jobs;
- A web search of HOME *LowincomeHousing.us* found no listings in the county or FG;
- If you pay more than 30% of your income for housing you are at risk of homelessness due to a job loss or major medical emergency

Washington County like other metro counties faces gentrification and low vacancy rates in rental and owner occupied housing.

The county housing authority has a waiting list of 5000 – which means a 5 year wait for those on that list...

**Sadly Washington County has a housing capacity gap of 14,000 units (supply less than demand).** This fall we had to return \$221,000 in federal homeless grant funds because there was not enough rental housing available.

Despite Washington County's reputation as the economic engine of Oregon, the gap between the "haves and have-nots" grows exponentially putting more county residents at risk of homelessness.

As a member of our county's **Homeless Advisory Plan Committee** since 2009, I hear heart-breaking examples from county service providers about at risk children, victims of abuse and the elderly poor.

Lower income employees in Washington County, 40% of our county workforce, are a job loss or major medical emergency away from homelessness.

We have a huge hill to climb to meet the current need for affordable housing in Forest Grove, Washington County, Oregon and the USA

*At the rate of @ adding 120 affordable units per year it will take the county 116 years to close the 14K gap – which is why we need a collaborative plan at all governmental levels along with public/private partnership to address our housing gap...*

As a long time citizen advocate on affordable housing, I join with others to support HB 4001.

Sincerely,

Russell A. Dondero

Professor Emeritus, Pacific University

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