

Date: *March 20, 2017*

RE: HB 5012: Joint Ways and Means Sub-Committee on Transportation and Economic Development.

Dear Co-Chair Betsy Johnson, Co-Chair David Gomberg, and Members of the Committee

My name is James Beechey. I volunteer at a United Methodist Church in Springfield, Oregon. The church is part of the Egan Warming Center Program which provides shelter to our most vulnerable citizens during often potentially lethal weather conditions; and additionally, through the church's meals program provides many meals for our citizens in need. There I have had the opportunity to serve our fellow citizens and see the devastating effects of homelessness and the despair of our borderline low income citizens. We have a serious shortage of affordable housing. Our neighbors are facing homelessness and home ownership is out of reach for many citizens. According to 2016 Lane County data: 11,635 affordable housing units are needed to meet the need of extremely low income families; 1 out of 3 renters are paying more than 50% of their income in rent, as well as 3 of 4 extremely low income renters. 2,387 children during the 2015-2016 school year experienced homelessness; the housing wage to rent a 1 bedroom apartment was \$27,160. I am a senior citizen on a fixed income of \$25,220.

In every community in our state, American citizens and families are struggling to make ends meet and too often just survive. They are often forced to choose between paying rent and putting food on the table. We need to make sure that everyone has a safe, stable, and affordable place to call home. By doing so, we will be making our communities stronger and safer in a more humane and affordable way than by doing nothing and incurring greater crime, health and social costs. Under the current political/economic environment and budget constraints; rising interest rates; rising housing prices and rent increases; we may be facing the tip of the iceberg in homelessness and poverty, all at a time when income inequality is approaching all time highs. The situation is politically and socially indefensible.

Please support the *Emergency Housing Account* and *State Homeless Assistance Program* at a proactive and sustainable level of \$50 million. These are proven programs that provide critical funds to local communities to prevent and address homelessness and provide emergency shelter.

Thank you for your public service and support of this action.

Sincerely, James Beechey
974 W. L Street
Springfield, Oregon 97477-2841