



Joint Subcommittee on Transportation and Economic Development,

Co-Chairs Johnson and Gomberg and members of the committee, Home Forward is the housing authority serving Multnomah County and we operate the largest portfolio of affordable housing in Oregon. Our 6,436 units in 108 buildings provide safe and stable homes for working families, seniors, Oregonians with disabilities, veterans and people transitioning from homelessness.

Home Forward's oldest property is 105 years old and our youngest is three. Like all homes, we need to periodically replace leaking roofs, repair failing siding and envelope systems so that they can keep enduring Oregon's rainy winters. We have learned over the years that a typical wood-frame family property needs to be significantly rehabbed every 25-30 years, while our mid- to high-rises can last a bit longer, at roughly 40 years. In the intervening years, we struggle to extend the useful life of our properties' major systems through preventative maintenance, selective repairs, and energy-efficient retrofits. It is race against time and since our rents are restricted, we need additional resources to keep our buildings from reaching physical obsolescence and becoming unsafe for people to live in.

Home Forward has used a multitude of financing tools to develop housing in our community. One of those tools is the federal assistance that we have used for over 75 years to build public housing. This type of housing makes up a significant portion of our portfolio and has the most immediate preservation needs. The Oregonians who live in public housing are truly our community's most vulnerable citizens.

Over 80% of the people living in Home Forward's public housing earn between 0-30% of the area median income and pay 28.5% - 31% of their income towards rent. This type of housing provides long-term stability to thousands of older Oregonians and helps people live independently for as long as possible while avoiding more costly assisted living facilities. It offers people dignity, permanence, and helps them stay in amazing neighborhoods with transit options, grocery stores, and hospitals.

The average resident in our public housing is a 55 year old woman with a disability earning around \$9-\$10k a year. These are people like Trish Baker, who has lived at Home Forward's Gallagher Plaza in NW Portland for over 20 years. She worked in healthcare and now lives on a fixed income. Trish remains active in the building and around the neighborhood. "It's a wonderful community" she says, "I think it is much healthier, both for someone's physical and mental health, to be involved and connected with people." In today's private rental market, Trish would be paying all of her income for rent or she would be forced to move away from her neighborhood, her friends, her church and her primary care physician.

The lack of affordable housing in the Portland metro region is causing a huge increase in the number of people experiencing homelessness in our community. For the people trying to survive on our streets, homelessness is dangerous, traumatizing and difficult to escape. It is also incredibly expensive for the general public.

As much as our community needs new affordable housing, the most important investment we can make in our industry today is preserving our current stock of publically financed housing. For Home Forward, we would never be able to rebuild these buildings in the neighborhoods they are in, at their current density and for the population they currently serve. They are impossible to replicate today and without them, we would have a huge influx of people joining the unacceptable amount of Oregonians already searching for shelter and food, utilizing emergency rooms, overwhelming law enforcement, and camping in front of local businesses. Preserving these community assets and keeping our state's most vulnerable people in their homes is sound policy and should be our highest priority.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M Buonocore", followed by a long horizontal flourish line extending to the right.

Michael Buonocore  
Executive Director  
Home Forward