



March 20th, 2017

Co-Chairs Johnson and Gomberg
Joint Subcommittee on Transportation and Economic Development
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: HB 5012 – Support for Increased Funding for the Emergency Housing Account (EHA) and State Homeless Assistance Program (SHAP)

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

Like many communities across Oregon, Hillsboro is experiencing rising housing costs, an increase in cost-burdened households, and more people living in poverty and experiencing homelessness. Housing costs continue to outpace income growth for the Portland Metro region and from 2000-2012, the poverty rate has cumulatively increased by 76% in Washington County.

In 2014, 14 percent of individuals in Hillsboro were living below the poverty level, and that number is very likely higher today. During the 2016 Point in Time Homelessness Count conducted by Washington County, Community Action and other partner organizations, 14,431 people were identified as living in poverty in the Hillsboro community. In addition to those living in poverty, there were 409 living in homelessness, 115 of which were heads of households. An additional 203 individuals were identified as being at-risk of losing their housing within 14 days.

Housing instability creates long term implications for communities. A lack of stable housing leads to health, social, and economic burdens for residents as families sacrifice food, health care, transportation and other critical areas in order to afford their rent. Chronic homelessness also has many far-reaching impacts to communities – especially as the numbers continue to grow.

The City of Hillsboro works closely with Washington County and local nonprofit organizations to help address issues of homelessness and housing instability in the Hillsboro community. The City makes \$100,000 per year available to local nonprofits through an annual competitive grant program to address social service needs. Over 20 different agencies typically receive funds ranging from \$1000-\$8000 to help with projects and programs. This year, the City has also created a new pilot program by which \$120,000 over 3 years (\$40,000 per year) will be granted to a single organization to help address homelessness and housing instability specifically. Although these City General Fund contributions can help make an impact, we realize that

compared to the scope of the problems, it is merely a starting point. This is one of many reasons why the City of Hillsboro strongly supports increased funding for EHA and SHAP.

As the Housing Crisis deepens Statewide, the time is now for an “all hands on deck” approach and for a maximization of resources to combat poverty, to assist cost-burdened households and to reduce our homeless populations. Cities across Oregon are looking to the State to continue its leadership on these critical issues.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Tami Cockeram', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Tami Cockeram
Community Services Manager
City of Hillsboro