



March 20, 2017

Senator Betsy Johnson, Co-Chair
Representative David Gomberg, Co-Chair
Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee, Transportation and Economic Development
900 Court Street NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

Dear Co-Chairs Johnson and Gomberg and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of the 2017-2019 Housing and Community Services budget, and to ask for your support for one important addition to that budget request.

NEDCO is a nonprofit CDC dedicated to helping low income families and communities build a better financial future. We provide services ranging from financial literacy to foreclosure prevention, and from microbusiness lending to affordable housing. NEDCO serves more than 1200 low income families each year across Lane, Marion, and Clackamas Counties, helping families to permanently break the cycle of poverty.

OHCS is an invaluable partner for NEDCO across many program areas, including the Regional Housing Centers (for first time homeownership education), down payment assistance, Oregon Bond Loan, Individual Development Accounts (IDAs), and foreclosure prevention counseling. Your support is crucial to ensuring that these programs continue to assist vulnerable Oregonians.

Unfortunately, funding to continue foreclosure counseling for homeowners entering the Oregon Foreclosure Avoidance (OFA) mediation program has been eliminated from the OHCS budget request. Although the economy and the housing market are improving, that recovery has not been equal for all areas of the state or for all Oregonians. The OFA mediation program continues to average more than 600 new homeowner referrals each month, and counseling programs remain highly utilized. With foreclosure funding at the federal level already gone, the elimination of OFA counseling funding would lead to the end of foreclosure counseling programs across the state, leaving thousands of families over the next biennium without the help and information needed to avoid foreclosure.

We appreciate the committee's ongoing support for affordable housing for all Oregonians, and we encourage you to approve the OHCS budget request with the addition of OFA counseling funding.

Sincerely,

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