

March 20, 2017

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

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

I would like to thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of the 2017-2019 Oregon Housing and Community Services Department budget request. My name is Margaret Jonsson and I serve as the Director of Housing Development and Management of Cascadia Behavioral Healthcare. Cascadia Behavioral Healthcare is a nonprofit organization dedicated to providing healing, homes and hope for people living with mental health and addiction challenges. We envision a future where everyone with a mental illness or addiction will receive intergrated healthcare, experience well-being and have a full like in the community. We serve people in the Tri-county area as well as Lane County.

As a key partner in delivering affordable housing to many vulnerable Oregonians, we know firsthand the importance of growing both resources to build new housing and OHCS capacity to get funding out of the door as quickly and responsibly as possible. The support we receive from OHCS staff over the life of a project is extremely vital to ensuring that projects are completed in a timely fashion. Every day a family has to suffer through housing instability is a day too long. We ask that you support the staff that supports us in making those number of days as little as possible.

We would also like to voice our support of our new OHCS Director, Margaret Salazar. Director Salazar came into an agency in dire need of leadership and bold vision and started delivering on day one. With the support of her leadership team and staff, she has already started the process of tackling some of the most longstanding issues identified in the most recent audit of the department. Not to mention, her steadfast leadership in addressing the funding gap caused by instability in the LIHTC market. We ask that you support Director Salazar with the resources she needs to keep the department moving forward.

In closing, OHCS is a vital part of what makes affordable housing work in Oregon. Safe and stable housing is a basic need for every Oregonian regardless of race, socioeconomic status, or lived experience. We ask that you approve a budget that provides the foundation for self-sufficiency and upward mobility – a safe place to call home.

Sincerely,

Margaret Jonsson, Director of Housing Development and Management