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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
By email to: jwmtr.exhibits@oregonlegislature.gov

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 Oregon Housing and Community Services (OHCS) Department budget request.

My name is Stephen McMurtrey and I serve as the Housing Development Director of Northwest Housing Alternatives (NHA). NHA is a nonprofit organization, our mission is to create opportunity through housing. We believe that everyone needs a place to call home and we are passionately committed to creating new homes and providing new opportunities for families, seniors and adults with special needs across the State of Oregon.

As a key partner in delivering affordable housing to many vulnerable Oregonians, we know firsthand the importance of growing resources to build new housing while simultaneously grooming capacity to implement funding efficiently and responsibly. The support we receive from OHCS staff over the life of a project is vital to ensuring projects are completed in a timely fashion. We urge you to support the efforts of OHCS staff who work every day to provide housing stability throughout the state.

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 begun the process of tackling some of the most longstanding issues identified in the most recent audit of the department. She has also demonstrated 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,

Stephen McMurtrey
Housing Development Director