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AARP Oregon Testimony on HB 2961 – Housing Rehab and Repair

March 23, 2017

TO: House Committee on Human Services and Housing, Rep. Keny-Guyer, Chair

FROM: Bandana Shrestha, Community Engagement Director, AARP Oregon

AARP is pleased to support HB 2961, a bill that seeks to establish a homeownership repair and rehabilitation program that will assist low-income Oregon household with repair and rehabilitation of residences.

AARP is the nation's largest nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to empowering Americans 50 and older to choose how they live as they age. With nearly 38 million members nationwide and 500,000 in Oregon, we work to strengthen communities and advocate for what matters most to families. An important aspect of our work in Oregon is advocating for livable and age-friendly communities, including expanding housing options and ensuring access to affordable, safe, secure, and accessible homes for Oregonians of all ages and abilities.

AARP research tells us that 90% of people 65 and older want to remain in their homes and communities as they get older. However, for many older adults, remaining at home can become difficult, dangerous, and often impossible. Today, over 63% of Oregon homeowners aged 50+ and 53.5% of those aged 65+ are cost burdened, meaning they pay more than 30% of their income on housing. Of those 65+, 20% pay more than 50% and more alarmingly, nearly 40% of Oregon homeowners aged 85+ pay more than 50% of their income on housing. Nearly 40% of Oregon homeowners ages 50+ live in homes built before 1970, especially in rural areas. Often without some modifications, these homes do not have accessibility features, like wider hallways, a no-step entry and an accessible bathroom on the main floor, that enable people to continue to live safely at home as they age and their needs change.

For many older adults, people with disabilities, and people with low incomes, essentials like repairing a leaking roof or making much needed home modifications are not possible without some help. The impact of deferred maintenance, repair and modification, especially for some of our most vulnerable older adults and people with disabilities can be devastating, resulting in debilitating falls, loss of independence, premature or unnecessary costly institutionalization on taxpayer dollars, homelessness or even death.

AARP believes that HB 2961 is a good step towards addressing a critical need in our communities. The small investments made possible by the program proposed will not only help individual homeowners, will also protect single family home stock for the next generation. Everyone deserves to live in a safe home. Keeping people at home and ensuring their safety and continued independence is smart and cost effective and HB 2961 will do exactly that.

On behalf of the over half million AARP members ages 50+ statewide, we urge you to support HB 2861.

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- http://assets.aarp.org/rgcenter/ppi/liv-com/AARP_Housing2011_Full.pdf
 - http://www.jchs.harvard.edu/sites/jchs.harvard.edu/files/jchs-housing_americas_older_adults_2014.pdf
 - <http://www.aarp.org/research/topics/community/info-2015/Home-and-Community-Preferences-45Plus.html>

Real Possibilities