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April 25, 2017

Dear Chair Keny-Guyer, Vice-Chairs Olson and Sanchez, and Members of the Committee:

I am writing this letter on behalf of NeighborWorks Umpqua in Southern Oregon. NeighborWorks Umpqua supports HB 3357, increasing the document recording fee to \$40. NWU also supports allowing for a portion of this fee to go to local county clerks to offset administrative costs. In addition to recognizing the benefits of the document recording fee to housing initiatives in Oregon, NWU recognizes the increasing need for county government to effectively cover their costs of administration of such fees – particularly in rural areas of the state where budgets are increasingly challenging.

The document recording fee has been an effective tool for affordable housing, home ownership and emergency housing. In Douglas, Coos and Curry counties, NeighborWorks Umpqua operates two housing centers, helping local residents have a knowledgeable and trusted resource for assistance both to buy a home and to prevent foreclosure on an existing home. In addition, our down payment assistance often is just the resource new home buyers need to make a deal work, and we partner with many realtors and lenders to get those deals done. Both our partner realtors and lenders frequently express gratitude that NWU can bring those funds to the table, making deals happen. When we explain to them where the funding comes from, all have so far been very supportive and satisfied by the local impact made.

NeighborWorks Umpqua believes in doing our part to create strong, vibrant, economically viable rural communities. We do this work through the creation of affordable rental housing as well as the previously mentioned work. The document recording fee helps to fund rural rental housing – which is an increasingly difficult feat through many of our more traditional funding sources, such as tax credits. Strengthening this resource helps to make the development of rental housing in rural Oregon viable.

Our local community action agency, UCAN, also uses the funds to provide for homelessness prevention and emergency rent assistance. The increase from this legislation will help us both to strengthen our ability to address the housing needs of rural Oregon.

We urge the members of the committee to support HB 3357, and to amend the bill to allow county governments to retain a portion of this fee for administrative overhead.

Respectfully  
Stacey Daniel  
Director of Policy and Advocacy