



Testimony in Support of SB 5505
Joint Ways & Means Subcommittee on Capital Construction
Submitted By: Sybil Hebb May 18th, 2015

Co-Chairs Girod and Holvey, and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Oregon Law Center (OLC), thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of SB 5505, to increase funds available for the Local Innovation and Fast Track (LIFT) housing development program. This program supports critically necessary new affordable housing for low-income families in our communities. As one measure of addressing the depth and breadth of the housing crisis Oregonians are suffering across the state, we hope you will support \$100 million in XI-Q bonds for the LIFT program.

As you know, OLC's mission is to achieve justice for low-income communities by providing a full range of the highest quality civil legal services. One of the most important issues in the lives of our clients is the challenge to find safe, stable, and affordable housing. Housing is about opportunity. Without safe and stable housing, it is difficult or impossible for low-income families to hold down a job, keep children in school, access neighborhood amenities, and stay healthy.

In a growing number of communities across the state, there is little to no available and affordable housing. Statewide, for every 100 very low-income families, there are only 20 units of affordable housing available.¹ This makes it virtually impossible to find housing in a new community, or to leave housing that is unsafe or in bad repair. Affordable housing is disproportionately difficult to find and maintain for minority communities, single women with children, and people with disabilities.

One example illustrating several aspects of our affordable housing crisis is a woman from rural southern Oregon who sought assistance from our office after she received a no-cause eviction when her apartment building had been sold. She had lived in her apartment for 10 years. She had 60 days to find a new home for herself and her 2 children, one of whom is in high school and was on-track to graduate on time. The surrounding community has a vacancy rate of approximately 1%. Our client was unable to find a place she could afford within the 60 days, so spent 2 weeks in a motel and then had to move into her car. Her children slept at friends' houses. They missed school. Her daughter is no longer on track to graduate on time.

This housing crisis also has a particularly serious impact on our clients who are victims of domestic and sexual violence and their children. Without access to safe and affordable housing, victims are at greater risk of heightened abuse or homelessness. Many domestic and sexual violence shelters are unable to house families longer than 30 days. Victims in our communities often face the terrible choice between homelessness and returning to unsafe homes, risking further violence for themselves and their children regardless of their choice.

¹ <http://www.oregonhousingalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/State-of-Oregon-2016-color.pdf>

Safe shelter and housing create opportunity, and are keys to breaking the cycle of poverty and violence. When children have a stable place to call home, their educational and psychological development can continue without impediment. The creation of permanent affordable housing resources in our communities can save lives, and futures.

Oregon has an opportunity to ensure greater safety for vulnerable populations, families, and communities. We respectfully urge your support of the proposed \$100 million investment in new permanent housing resources, so that we can provide parents and their children a safe place to call home.

Thank you for your service, and for the opportunity to submit testimony on this critical budget item.