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**House Human Services and Housing Committee  
Testimony in Support of HB 2002  
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Chair Keny-Guyer, Vice-Chairs Sanchez and Stark, and members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Oregon Law Center, I submit this written testimony in support of HB 2002, which would support the preservation of affordable housing in our communities.

The Oregon Law Center (OLC) is a non-profit law firm whose mission is to achieve justice for low-income communities of Oregon 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, affordable housing. Safe and stable housing is a basic human need. Housing is about much more than a roof over one's head; it 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 safe and healthy. The availability of affordable and stable housing plays a critical role in the lives of our clients and our communities.

Our state is currently facing a severe housing crisis. Vacancy rates are at all-time lows in many areas of the state, and housing costs are rising at rates that far outpace income growth. For every 100 very low income families, there are only 20 units of affordable housing available. And in many instances, affordable housing contract periods are close to expiring. If we lose these units to the private market, we not only destabilize struggling families and communities, we lose access to valuable federal rent assistance dollars.

The housing crisis facing Oregon requires multi-pronged solutions. We must make homeownership more accessible, and ensure the availability of affordable rental housing. Oregonians who rent their homes must have protection against sudden displacement without cause. We must ensure access to safe shelter for those fleeing violence and for others without homes, and we must provide emergency assistance for those at risk of homelessness. These approaches work together to ensure that our families and our communities will have a positive future.

HB 2002 proposes one creative way to support the preservation of currently affordable housing by facilitating the opportunity for local governments, tenant associations, or the state to purchase these properties prior to sale into the private market. Preserving this housing stock as affordable would help protect community stability and retain a valuable resource for our families.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony, and for your work and consideration.