



We build strength, stability, self-reliance and shelter.

February 2, 2018

To: House Committee on Human Services & Housing,

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

My name is Shannon Vilhauer, and I am the Executive Director of Habitat for Humanity of Oregon. I am writing to share our organization's support for HJR 201.

Everyone in Oregon should be able to access opportunity, which starts with a safe, stable and affordable place to call home. Today, far too many of our community members are struggling to afford high housing costs. Every day, Oregonians are forced to choose between paying rent or buying other necessities, like food and medicine.

We have the know-how to build more affordable homes in communities throughout the state. Bonds are an incredibly powerful tool to help us meet local affordable housing needs. We have successfully used bonds at the state and local level to help create and preserve much-needed affordable housing. Habitat for Humanity of Oregon and other affordable homeownership developers are anxiously awaiting the LIFT for Homeownership notice of funding availability, set to release next week.

Unfortunately, the Oregon State Constitution currently limits our ability to use bonds to build and preserve desperately needed affordable housing. Additional flexibility will ensure that we can better leverage Federal funding opportunities, so that each affordable housing bond dollar stretches further, to serve more Oregonians struggling to make ends meet.

With this ballot referral, voters will be asked to approve a much-needed technical fix to the Oregon Constitution. Article XI, Section 9 limits the ability of municipalities to lend their credit for the benefit of a private party. An unintended consequence of this stipulation is that bonds issued by a local jurisdiction for affordable housing cannot be used with other funding sources, like federal tax credits. As written now, the bond funded housing must be owned and controlled by the municipality who issues the bond, which effectively limits this strategy to large, urban municipalities.

Please provide Oregon voters with the opportunity to ensure that local municipalities can effectively use their tools to get more affordable homes on the ground, bringing every resource available to our state to address critical housing needs.

Habitat for Humanity of Oregon

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Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of HJR 201 and for your service to Oregon communities

Respectfully,



Shannon M. Vilhauer, Executive Director