



February 8, 2018

To: Chair Keny-Guyer and Members of the Human Services and Housing Committee

From: Peter Hainley, Executive Director of CASA of Oregon

RE: HB 4010

CASA of Oregon is a nonprofit community development organization that works throughout rural Oregon to support thriving, diverse communities. We work with employers, local nonprofits, housing authorities, governments and the larger community to help meet the housing needs of farmworkers, seniors, the disabled and other underserved populations. We create multi- and single-family housing opportunities through an array of programs including down payment assistance, lease-to-own and the creation of nonprofit cooperative manufactured home communities. To date, we have helped more than 2400 families secure funding, counseling and other services that helped them achieve the “American Dream”.

The formation of a *Task Force on Addressing Racial Disparities in Home Ownership* is an excellent first step to remedying the *de jure* segregation that exists in our country. By spending time understanding that the residential segregation that has occurred in this country was often intentional by law and public policy, we can begin to formulate a remedy. Multiple institutions are complicit in this *de jure* segregation: local, state and federal governments, the courts and anchor institutions like our local churches, hospitals and universities.

I served on the 1999 Farmworker Housing Interim Task Force which made recommendations to the 2001 legislature, most of which were adopted. While that report only touched briefly on the issue of race and discrimination, I can tell you that CASA’s work in rural communities serving minority populations has faced overt and covert opposition due to the population being served. Conscious and unconscious bias abound in our society, and until we confront it, America will continue to be less, rather than more “a perfect union”.

While the legislature has typically shied away from task forces in favor of more informal (and less costly) work groups, the issue of racial segregation in housing deserves a much more open and public process. We cannot ignore the fact that our country was founded and thrived (in an economic sense) on forced labor and that we have almost 250 years of not properly addressing the issues of race, discrimination and segregation. While the legislature’s consideration and passing of HB 4010 is but a small step, it is a hugely important one.

I urge you to pass HB 4010.