



Coastal Housing Center  
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Main Office  
605 SE Kane St.  
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March 17<sup>th</sup>, 2020

Joint Special Committee on Coronavirus Response  
Oregon State Legislature  
900 Court Street NE  
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Co-Chair Roblan, Co-Chair Holvey, and Esteemed Members of the Committee,

I write you today on behalf of NeighborWorks Umpqua to share our organization’s thoughts on what our rural communities will need to weather the housing, employment and health impacts of COVID-19.

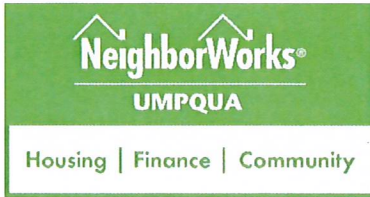
NeighborWorks Umpqua is a rural-focused housing and community development corporation committed to promoting opportunity for all. Working in the five counties of Southwestern Oregon (Coos, Curry, Douglas, Jackson & Josephine), NeighborWorks Umpqua provides housing, community development, financial services and program-specific education directly to individuals and through partner organizations in our service area.

NeighborWorks Umpqua is one of many organizations committed to supporting families and communities in rural areas of the state. We urge you to center the voices and perspectives of those who are and will be most impacted by COVID-19 state of emergency. Equitable distribution of state resources will be key to ensuring that rural communities and underserved communities in rural spaces are not left under supported during this unprecedented modern crisis. Below please find a list of ideas that would directly support families to remain safely housed and also support our nonprofit organization to better serve our communities during this time:

- Embed community health workers in affordable housing developments.
  - Several of NWU’s properties house a significant senior population, in addition to individuals who have complicated medical histories
- Provide emergency rental and utility assistance for families affected by COVID-19.
  - NWU sees this as an essential piece to effectively implementing an eviction moratorium
  - Provide financial assistance so properties/owners can accommodate lack of income if not collecting rent payments
- Provide greater access to emergency housing programs/services.
- Provide additional food resources.
  - Several of NWUs properties are in food deserts with limited public transportation options
- Abatement and technical support for multi-family housing providers with renters directly affected by COVID-19



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- Organizations like NWU are responsible for the environmental health of our renters and actively need to support individual efforts like social distancing and self-quarantine
- Provide regulatory relief allowing for changes in property management and operations to support social distancing efforts including suspending compliance requirements for
  - Annual income recertifications
  - Compliance-related unit inspections
- Increase funding for foreclosure avoidance/forbearance programs and specifically foreclosure prevention counseling.
- Translation and interpretation support to customers to navigate health systems, state programs, and access resources; alternatively, funding support to organizations like ours to offset the cost of those services.

NeighborWorks Umpqua would like to thank you for your service and leadership during this challenging time.

Sincerely,

Merten Bangemann Johnson  
Chief Executive Officer  
NeighborWorks Umpqua

Arielle Reid  
Director of Policy & Advocacy  
NeighborWorks Umpqua

