



BUILDING SUSTAINING LEADING

BRIDGE HOUSING
CORPORATION

BRIDGE PROPERTY
MANAGEMENT COMPANY

BRIDGE ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

(Conveyed by Electronic Transmission)

June, 22, 2020

House Speaker Tina Kotek
900 Court St. NE, Rm. 269
Salem, Oregon 97301

Representative Julie Fahey, Chair
House Interim Committee on Housing
900 Court St. NE, H-474
Salem, Oregon 97301

RE: Special Session Housing Assistance for Rental Arrears and Tenant Eviction Prevention

Dear Speaker Kotek and Chair Fahey;

I am writing on behalf of BRIDGE Housing, a mission driven non-profit housing developer who has provided over 1,200 affordable dwellings in Portland and Washington County in Oregon. We partner with Oregon Housing and Community Services (OHCS), local governments, lenders and investors to produce and preserve affordable housing. In 2019, we completed *Cornelius Place* (45 affordable senior apartments and a public library) in the City of Cornelius, Oregon as well as *The Vera* (203 affordable apartments) located in Portland's South Waterfront. Currently, we are under construction with Colas Construction at North Williams and North Tillamook on *Songbird*, an additional 61 affordable homes for the people of Portland. These all share a common trait; they are well designed in partnership with local governments (these sites were from surplus public land) and in partnership with OHCS provide permanently affordable housing stock to serve needy Oregonians who are otherwise priced out of high quality affordable housing. We also work in alliance with local non-profit service providers; Centro Cultural and Impact Northwest at Cornelius and Portland, respectively, to provide culturally-specific services.

BRIDGE is dedicated to a mission of providing quality affordable housing because every Oregonian deserves a safe, stable, and affordable place to call home. Our goal to provide equitable, inclusive and sustainable housing options to low income Oregonians has been complicated by the COVID-19 pandemic and the economic crisis which has since ensued. Some residents are in arrears due to job losses, and while we have extended payment plan options to all residents, their future ability to repay the back rent and sustain their housing is uncertain. They need your help due to recent job losses and economic dislocation. We urge that the following assistance be provided:

- CARES Act funding of \$50 million be extended statewide to households up to 80% of the Area Median Income to address a backlog statewide of \$350 million in unpaid residential rent;
- Renew and extend the moratorium on residential rental evictions to October, 2020;

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- Repayment periods as generous as possible while still preserving the rights of landlords to collect legitimate rental income owed; and
- Ensure no late fees may accrue during the moratorium, as extended.

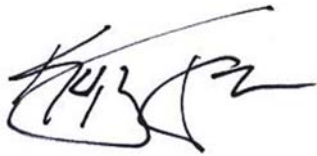
Housing stability is paramount for low and moderate income households during this pandemic. Children and frail seniors alike need the stability of secure housing. We all need a place to shelter and stay safe, and individuals and families with low incomes deserve the same access to opportunity in life as we all enjoy. BRIDGE Housing is fortunate not to have experienced the significant losses of many social housing providers. That said, many of our families have experienced job losses and are under severe stress, financially and emotionally.

Many of our commercial tenants (retail establishments on the ground floor of mixed use buildings like the *Sitka* in Northwest Portland) have also suffered severe business losses and are in arrears on their lease payments. Likewise, we have granted forbearance to these lessors in an attempt to stabilize their business operations until they can return to a viable business operation. If CARES Act funding may be used to offset the arrears for women and minority disadvantaged small business, it would be extremely helpful to help them recover financially.

We are also concerned about filling vacancies within the upcoming *Songbird Apartments* in North Portland because tenants who are in arrears on an existing property elsewhere are generally not eligible for placement in a new unit until they clear their back rent owed. It would be very helpful for the State of Oregon to use CARES Act funding to help cure these arrears helping get people and families into better long term housing. *Songbird* residents will be placed through the City of Portland preference policy for N/NE Portland which enables people displaced from the neighborhood a path to return to Albina, a neighborhood of their choice.

In closing, I want to thank you for making housing a priority. Your leadership during these difficult times is paramount to our shared success.

Best regards;

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kurt Creager', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Kurt Creager, EVP
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Copy: Margaret Salazar, Executive Director, Oregon Housing & Community Services
Shannon Singleton, Housing Policy Advisor, Oregon Governor Kate Brown
Shannon Callahan, Director, Portland Housing Bureau