



HOUSING ALLIANCE

February 18, 2019

Senate Committee on Housing
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Chair Fagan, Vice Chair Heard, and members of the Committee:

I am writing to you today on behalf of the Oregon Housing Alliance to express our support for SB 595, which allows local communities to dedicate resources to affordable housing.

The Oregon Housing Alliance is a coalition of ninety organizations from all parts of the state. Our members have come together with the knowledge that housing opportunity is the foundation on which all of our success is built – individual success as students, parents, workers, and community members as well as the success of our communities. We represent a diverse set of voices including non-profit housing developers, residents of affordable housing, local jurisdictions, and organizations working to meet basic needs in every corner of our state.

We believe that all Oregonians need a safe, stable, and affordable place to call home.

Today, we simply don't have enough affordable homes for people who need them, and vacancy rates have dropped precipitously towards zero in communities across Oregon. People are struggling with homelessness, housing instability, rent burdens, and to make ends meet and put food on the table. During the last school year, over 22,000 of our school children in grades K – 12 experienced homelessness at some point during the year.

We know that Oregon has a serious and significant problem with housing in communities across the state, and that the lack of housing that is both available and affordable is impacting people with a range of incomes. This shortage of housing affects local the workforce, most acutely in areas where there is significant tourism. Over the years, in these areas, new housing has been built to serve as a second house or a vacation house, or rentals that were previously available to local workers are now short term vacation rentals.

Over the last three years, we have heard numerous stories of employers being unable to attract or maintain talented workers because they simply cannot find housing near their work. This problem spans the income spectrum:

- At the Coast, a popular restaurant can no longer open its dining room because of a lack of housing for minimum wage workers.
- Further south, in Tillamook, the Creamery has shared publicly¹ about the struggles with finding workers who can also find a place to live in the community.
- Communities share stories about being unable to hire high-level positions such as city managers or health department managers because of the lack of housing.
- In the Gorge, there are common stories about teachers sleeping in vans while looking for housing at the beginning of the school year.

¹ <https://news.streetroots.org/2018/06/22/tillamook-creamery-partners-locals-tackle-area-housing-shortage>

These are just a few of the examples we hear. We also have heard stories of employees commuting extreme distances to work every morning and evening because they cannot find housing near their employment.

We believe we need to try a range of strategies to solve the problems our communities are facing. SB 595 will allow local communities to make a choice about how to effectively use resources from their transient lodging taxes to include funding for affordable housing.

We know that for many workers in the tourism industry, their wages do not support being able to access market rate housing, and in particular, in places along the coast where there is such a shortage of any available housing. We need to address the problems our communities are facing, even if it means changing historic agreements when they longer serve the best interests of our communities.

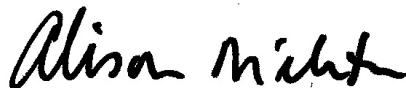
SB 595 simply allows local communities to make their own decisions about what they need and what the best choice is for their communities, whether that is housing to support their workforce, or strategies to address chronic and persistent homelessness. SB 595 does not require communities who have plans in place to invest in tourism infrastructure to reallocate funds to housing.

We know what home, and what stable housing, means to all of us. When people have safe and stable housing, it has important and significant benefits. Kids are able to focus on the things that matter – being kids, doing their homework – instead of worrying about where their families will sleep at night. Parents are able to focus on work. Safe and stable housing that people can afford is key to accessing opportunity.

We urge you to support SB 595.

Thank you very much for your time, and for your service to our state.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alison McIntosh". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Alison McIntosh
On Behalf of the Oregon Housing Alliance

Housing Alliance Members

1000 Friends of Oregon
211info
Aging in the Gorge
Benton Habitat for Humanity
Bienestar
Bradley Angle
BRIDGE Housing
CASA of Oregon
Central City Concern
Chrisman Development
Church Women United of Lane County
City of Beaverton
City of Creswell
City of Eugene
City of Forest Grove
City of Hillsboro
City of Hood River
City of Portland
City of Tigard
Coalition of Community Health Clinics
Coalition of Housing Advocates
Common Ground OR-WA
Community Action Partnership of Oregon
Community Action Team
Community Alliance of Tenants
Community Housing Fund
Community Partners for Affordable Housing
Community Vision
Cornerstone Community Housing
Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon
Enhabit
Enterprise Community Partners
Fair Housing Council of Oregon
FOOD for Lane County
Habitat for Humanity of Oregon
Habitat for Humanity Portland/Metro East
Hacienda CDC
Housing Authority of Clackamas County
Housing Development Center
Housing Oregon
Human Solutions
Immigrant & Refugee Community Organization
Impact Northwest
Innovative Housing, Inc.
Interfaith Alliance on Poverty
JOIN
Lane County Health and Human Services
League of Women Voters of Oregon
Lincoln County
Looking Glass Community Services
Mainstream Housing, Inc
Metro
Mid Columbia Housing Authority
Native American Youth and Family Center
(NAYA)
Neighborhood Economic Development Corp.
(NEDCO)
Neighborhood Partnerships
NeighborImpact
NeighborWorks Umpqua
Network for Oregon Affordable Housing
Northwest Housing Alternatives
Northwest Pilot Project
Oregon AFSCME Council 75
Oregon Center for Christian Voices
Oregon Center for Public Policy
Oregon Coalition on Housing & Homelessness
Oregon Council on Developmental Disabilities
Oregon Food Bank
Oregon Housing Authorities
Oregon Law Center
Partners for a Hunger-Free Oregon
Portland Community Reinvestment Initiatives
Portland Homeless Family Solutions
Portland Housing Center
Proud Ground
Raphael House
REACH CDC
Rogue Action Center
St. Vincent de Paul of Lane County, Inc.
ShelterCare
Sisters Habitat for Humanity
Sponsors, Inc.
SquareOne Villages
Street Roots
Transition Projects
Turning Point
Washington County
Welcome Home Coalition
Willamette Neighborhood Housing Services