



March 13, 2019

Testimony in Support of SB 790
Senate Committee on Human Services
900 Court Street NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

Dear Chair Gelser, Vice Chair Heard and Members of the Committee:

NEDCO and Willamette Neighborhood Housing Services are two nonprofit community development and counseling agencies that merged as of January 1st. For over a decade we have been members of the network of agencies that provide Individual Development Accounts (IDAs), education and counseling for families on their path to building assets. Our mission is to serve low and moderate income Oregonians to increase their financial security and build assets. We serve clients across four offices covering six counties: Lane, Linn, Benton, Lincoln, Marion and Clackamas Counties.

IDAs are one of the greatest financial resources we see in helping families obtain and maintain financial stability. When paired with education and counseling through agencies like ours, IDAs make a powerful impact in the lives of our clients. They create resilient families and communities by building financial health.

In 2015, Amelie came to our office with the goal of becoming a first-time homebuyer. She and her family worked through our financial and pre-purchase education and counseling program, making a plan to increase her income, pay down her debt and repair a few credit challenges. Despite all of her hard work to become financially stable and mortgage-ready, Amelie was facing home prices in Eugene over \$300,000 and rising rents-a market that makes it incredibly hard for families to save for their future. NEDCO was able to help Amelie access the IDA program, and while she worked on increasing her financial stability she also started saving. After three years, she saved \$3,000 and was matched with \$9,000, providing her with \$12,000 for down payment assistance. This was exactly what was needed to support Amelie and her family, and in late 2018 they were ecstatic to realize their goal and move into their first home.

We believe in the positive impact of IDAs in stabilizing families and communities, helping create life-long savers who are better prepared to weather the road ahead. IDAs build powerful assets, the most notable of which for our clients is homeownership. Homeownership is the single greatest way that Americans build wealth. It helps to break generational poverty and reduces the racial wealth gap. Kids succeed in school when they know their family has a safe, affordable place to call home, families are more

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engaged in their neighborhood and community and employer can rely on a more stable workforce.

We thank you for all that you've done to support low-income Oregonians and urge your continued support for SB 790, to expand the Oregon IDA program.

Sincerely,

Karen Saxe
Director of Asset Building Programs
NEDCO and Willamette Neighborhood Housing Services

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