

Testimony OHCS Budget SB 5512 March 25, 2019

Ways and Means Subcommittee on Transportation and Economic Development

Submitted by John Mullin on behalf of AARP

Jmullinhce@gmail.com 971-276-0610

AARP is the nation's largest nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to empowering Americans 50 and older to choose how they live as they age. With 510,000 members in Oregon, AARP works to strengthen communities and advocate for what matters most to families with a focus on health security, financial stability, and personal fulfillment. An important aspect of our work is advocating for livable and age-friendly communities, including expanding housing options, and ensuring access to affordable, safe, secure, and accessible homes for all Oregonians.

It gives me great personal and professional pleasure to support the broad outlines of the Oregon Housing and Community Services (OHCS) budget. I was involved in the public policy work that led to the creation of OHCS through a merger of State Community Services of the Department of Human Services and the State Housing Agency. The goal was to bring together the housing work with a state and local focus on alleviating the causes and conditions of poverty, principally through Community Action Agencies. As has often been noted, a broad array of housing options is critical to low income and special needs populations. But housing alone is not the complete picture. Services are also key - such as energy assistance, weatherization, homeless assistance programs, and a broad array of services based on local needs and resources.

You will hear compelling information today about current programs and the need for support of existing efforts and expansion of resources to bring housing and services to a higher level of impact and efficiency.

AARP Oregon has supported tenant protections, missing middle housing, affordable housing and more this session.

Affordable and accessible housing is fundamental to quality of life for people of all ages and abilities, family compositions, incomes and backgrounds. However, the reality of a safe, secure and comfortable home for many families in our communities is in jeopardy due the unprecedented housing crisis in our state. It certainly is so for many older Oregonians - from metro areas to rural communities. AARP Oregon has supported tenant protections, missing middle housing, affordable housing and more this session.

Through our work with the Housing Alliance, we have been asked to comment on housing preservation. **AARP supports increasing the amount of bonding authorized to be issued for the OHCS focus to preserve existing affordable housing.**

Currently thousands of affordable housing units throughout the state are at risk of transitioning to market rate if we do not have new reinvestment. Loss of units has real and grave implications. For older adults, loss of a home can mean loss of community ties, displacement, and even premature, unnecessary and costly institutionalization.

As the older adult population is projected to grow, it is anticipated that the number of low-income older adults will also grow. In addition we know that the incidence of housing cost burdens rises with age as incomes fall. We need your leadership to meet our state's housing needs and to create opportunity for all Oregonians through stable, safe, and affordable housing.

We must preserve existing affordable homes to be able to help accomplish this goal. Preservation funds can be used to support critical types of affordable housing, including rental housing built with public subsidies, public housing, and manufactured home parks.

Thank you for your leadership and commitment to make our state an age-friendly and livable place for people of all ages and abilities.