

March 25th, 2019

Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on
Transportation and Economic Development
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301



Co-Chair Manning, Co-Chair Gomberg, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Ethan Livermore and I am the public policy associate with Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon. We are a statewide association of Christian, ecumenical & interfaith partners working together to improve the lives of Oregonians.

Among our nine direct service programs, Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon provides services centered around those who are experiencing poverty and housing insecurity. Because of these services, we enthusiastically support HB 5512. Through serving roughly 17,000 clients, all of whom are low-income and experience housing instability through our Second Home, Metro HomeShare, and Patton Home programs, we see the need for action to be taken to help our brothers and sisters in need.

There are 3,493 unaccompanied K-12 students in our schools and those are just the students we know of. These students are by themselves, with no stable place to lay their head or call home. These students often have no other options but to sleep in their cars, couch surf, stay in shelters, or stay in a tent on the street any given night of the week. Not only does this issue affect high school graduation rates, but manifests as yet another road block for our communities of color, as youth homelessness disproportionately impacts our students of color.

We feel the need for additional resources to support preventing or ending homelessness through investments in EHA and SHAP, and investments in ending homelessness for children and families through expanding attention and investments in our Runaway and Homeless Youth Programs and a serious approach to tackle Oregon's housing crisis.

With our experience through our Metro HomeShare and Second Home programs, we support finding additional resources to support investments to assist renters in the private market. Additionally, increased resources to support developing

new affordable rental homes is a critical part of supporting our housing unstable Oregonians.

It is imperative to the future of Oregonians that are faced with these issues that we secure \$50 million in on-going funds for the Emergency Housing Account and State Homeless Assistance Program and \$20.5 million to support preventing and ending homelessness specifically for children and families.

It is time for us to make a commitment to our homeless students, our homeless neighbors, and our brothers and sisters feeling the brunt of Oregon's housing crisis. The legislature needs to stop accepting that our current funding levels will help solve this problem. We need to make a new, monumental investment in those who need these services. We need to take a moral inventory, to look at what we prioritize, what we know as Oregon values, and if we value our vulnerable youth struggling to make ends meet, then we need to act accordingly.

Thank you,

Ethan Livermore
Public Policy Associate
Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon