

Testimony representing Proud Ground and Housing Oregon on the Oregon Housing and Community Services budget requests. March 25, 2019

Co-Chair Manning and Co-Chair Gomberg and the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on these important budget proposals.

I'm Diane Linn, Executive Director of *Proud Ground* and on the Board of *Housing Oregon*. Proud Ground provides permanently affordable homeownership opportunities to working families in the Metro area and in Lincoln County. We work in partnership with Habitat for Humanity in Portland and with affiliates around the state. Housing Oregon provides a support network and advocacy on affordable housing issues statewide with members representing organizations implementing housing development and providing vital services.

- You know by now about the affordable housing crisis in our beloved Oregon. If granted the resources, we can create more affordable places to call home using our effective models along with our partners who build housing across the continuum including getting people off the streets.
- With the proposed budget request, Proud Ground, Habitat affiliates and the homeownership organizations have the capacity to build more homes. We serve families making as low as 30 and 80 % AMI and have wait lists of ready buyers anxious to be free of the brutal rental market or camping out in a subsidized rental unit because they have no place else to go. Once a family owns their home, they thrive – kids do better in school, health indicators and employment improves. Homeownership is a game changer for families and is desperately needed especially for families of color.

- In Lincoln County, we are implementing one of the Governor's pilot Workforce Housing Grant through the Greater Oregon Housing Accelerator Program. We have established MOU's with all of the major employers in the county and are matching employees with homes using a downpayment assistance grant to purchase homes on the market. Three homes have been sold and five more grants are available. Jessica is now raising her son in a home she now owns in Lincoln City thanks to this program. She has gotten a better job at the Samaritan North Lincoln Hospital and her son is doing well. (Her story in our newsletter.) People like Jessica want the chance to live in the community they work in and where their kids go to school. This program is working but we need more resources to expand our reach to more workers. It is a transformative process and the units will stay permanently affordable in the community for future generations. We are filling the gap between what homes cost on the market and what families can afford. Without a downpayment, homeownership is completely out of reach for hard working families like Jessica's.
- We simply need to expand these efforts and we are asking for your support to fund the requests in front of you today. The need for more housing to support employers' ability to attract and retain employees, and the importance of building relationships and collaboration between employers/business, local government and developers is imperative for our states economic growth .
- I must add that the LIFT program funding is also crucial because we need more inventory of homes in communities around the state. Proud Ground is the proud recipient of LIFT grant for a condo project in Portland where we will welcoming displaced families back to NE Portland. The expansion of LIFT is desperately needed.

- Please support the Governor and OHCS leadership request for \$15 million for the housing accelerator, and for more LIFT funds.
- We are also in strong support for the Department's request for increased staffing in order to ensure work happens smoothly. The staffing request isn't a general fund request – it's just position authority. We rely on the staff and they work hard to manage the resources but they need more capacity – it does impacted our efforts to implement the programs.
- Please support the OHCS budget and staffing requests and help us help families achieve a safe, stable, and affordable place to call home, and thank you for your attention and consideration.