



March 21, 2019

Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Transportation and Economic Development  
Attention: Co-Chair Manning, Co-Chair Gomberg, and Members of the Committee.

Dear Co-Chairs and Members of the Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee:

I am writing this letter in support of passage of SB 5512. I am the Executive Director of United Community Action Network (UCAN), a Community Action Agency. Our agency serves Douglas and Josephine County. UCAN's goal is that all Douglas and Josephine County residents have the resources and opportunities needed to reach their full social, civic, and economic potential, to be secure in their own lives and to be vital participants in their communities.

UCAN serves communities that have disproportionate numbers of seniors, people with disabilities and veterans. We also serve large numbers of low-income families and young children through many different early childhood programs. We provide an array of services, including housing and homeless services, early childhood education, home visiting and family strengthening, energy assistance, weatherization, emergency food distribution, nutrition, and volunteer services, including tax assistance, Medicare assistance, and prescription assistance.

Local children are being particularly impacted by our region's housing crisis. 1,651 children ages 17 and under were identified as homeless in 2017-2018 by local schools in the region. These children are at highest risk for poor life outcomes, including developmental problems, poor behavioral and physical health, shortened lives, poor educational outcomes and lifelong poverty.

While UCAN is advocating for additional funding for all OHCS programs addressing our region's housing crisis, we are particularly advocating for additional investments in Oregon's Emergency Housing Assistance and State Homeless Assistance Programs, and any other investments that will end homelessness for children and families. These specific resources provide for the development of innovative strategies to best address the needs of families at-risk of homelessness and families who are homeless, so they may quickly stabilize their housing situation. These resources provide flexibility to allow homeless families to first access from warming centers, shelters and day centers (locations used during the day by those without housing in which to obtain services), then move on to transitional or permanent affordable housing and finally obtain market-rate housing. These resources also play a critical role in bringing together partner agencies to address the various issues associated with the lack of stable housing, and to maximize positive outcomes for those in need of housing. An example of how these services are utilized to stabilize a family is enclosed as an attachment to this letter.

UCAN fervently believes that the availability of stable housing is critical for children to do well in school, for residents to enjoy good health, and for adults to obtain and maintain living wage jobs. UCAN has operated affordable housing for over two decades for those with special needs, and we have extensive experience operating many other services for those who are homeless and those in need of more



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affordable housing. In addition to our provision of affordable housing for special needs populations, UCAN also provides resident and supportive housing services, rental, move-in and utility assistance, rapid rehousing and homelessness prevention services, peer support, assistance finding housing and second chance renters programs. Our leadership have served on OHCS' Housing Stability Council and on the Rural Continuum of Care Board of Directors.

During FY 2017-2018, UCAN provided rental assistance alone through OHCS' Rapid Rehousing and Prevention to 1,252 unduplicated individuals. Despite this, looking at rental assistance alone in the region, we have had 200 people on a waiting list for three of our rental assistance programs. In addition, we have almost 200 people on our affordable housing wait list.

Additional funds to support all OHCS housing programs, and particularly those addressing homelessness among families with children, is of utmost importance to address our local crisis. With additional funds, UCAN could create multi-service delivery day centers (which currently do not exist in either County), expand/develop warming/cooling centers, offer emergency housing alternatives, and increase the inventory of affordable housing. Additional funds would allow us to deploy additional staff that are equipped with best practices to address the trauma experienced by those who have lived without stable housing. We would also be better able to interface with health care agencies and providers. As lack of housing directly leads to poor health outcomes, alignment of additional OHCS funding with those available in the healthcare field will maximize the impact of increased funding to address housing issues.

One of UCAN's core values is that everybody deserves Respect, Dignity, Compassion and Equity. Homelessness strips people of their respect and dignity, and marginalizes them so that others lose compassion for them. Our residents should not experience this plight, particularly our children. We ask that you maximize funding for OHCS' various housing programs, showing our region's children that Oregon cares for them.

Thank you for your time and your attention to this critical issue.

Sincerely,



Michael Fieldman  
Executive Director

## **UCAN EHA/SHAP Family Stabilization Story**

September 28 2018: Homeless Outreach Coordinator and Program Manager were conducting outreach at the weekly food truck and met a homeless couple that had recently been sexually assaulted. The couple was fearful as they have been getting followed and harassed by human traffickers in Josephine County. Program Manager contacted the Grants Pass Police Department and verified that the female did go to Three Rivers Hospital and reported being sexually assaulted yet was unwilling to press charges. The female later stated that she was told if she pressed charges that they will come after her. UCAN was able to assist couple in emergency shelter and start working with them towards stabilizing emotional support system with connecting with drug and alcohol services, domestic violence services, and provide transportation assistance to look for stable housing, attend classes for drug and alcohol abuse as well as meet the requirements of attending probation meetings with probation officer.

November 2018: They were placed into Permeant Supportive Housing program and started a Rent Well class at UCAN due to them having several challenges to secure housing that include past felonies, no rental history in the last 3 years, no income, poor credit and no one to co-sign for them to obtain housing. They began daily house search and connected with a local landlord. The landlord advised that there was a unit available yet due to their background would be willing to work with them if they were able to complete the educational classes with Rent Well.

December of 2019: They secured housing due to the completion of the rent well class and were approved for Rent Guarantee Program and signed a 12-month lease and moved into their home. Case manager was able to assist the household with purchase of housing supplies so that they were able to take care of the unit and continue to move forward with attending drug and alcohol classes. The male completed his supervision at parole and probation and is no longer on probation at Josephine County Parole and probation office. Both are still in the unit and are doing well with stabilizing their emotional well-being and moving forward towards self-sufficiency.