



March 26, 2019

To: Oregon State Legislature,
Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Transportation and Economic
Development

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

RE: Letter of Support for SB 5512

I am writing on behalf of Human Solutions in East Portland/East Multnomah County to convey our strong support for SB 5512.

Human Solutions' mission is to counter the forces that keep people and communities in poverty by building relationships and assets that create opportunity - today and for future generations. Specifically, *we partner* with people and communities impacted by poverty so they can achieve long-term housing and economic security, *we invest* in affordable housing and community assets that contribute to strong, inclusive neighborhoods, and *we advocate* with our community for policies and investments that expand housing and economic opportunity, eliminate wealth inequality and end poverty. East Portland/East Multnomah County, Oregon is our home and the heart of our investments, advocacy and programs.

Since 1988, Human Solutions has been partnering with individuals and families who seek out our services to achieve housing stability and economic security. The individuals and families we partner with experience extreme poverty and, in many cases, homelessness or significant housing instability/insecurity. More than half of the people we serve are children and we partner with their families to secure stable housing as a foundation to a thriving future. To achieve our mission, we offer a continuum of services that fall into three main categories:

1. Emergency support for those experiencing or at imminent risk of homelessness,
2. Long-term housing stabilization, which includes our own development and management of affordable housing (currently 720 units with 120 more in the pipeline), and
3. Economic security through programs that support career-track employment in living-wage professions.

Families in East Portland/East Multnomah County have and continue to feel the extreme impact of our statewide housing crisis. Sixty percent of the population is rent burdened, meaning they pay more than 30% of their income for their housing. In addition, area schools have very high rates of poverty (63-86% across four east metro districtsⁱ) and mobility rates over 20% - meaning children are moving too frequently to support their academic success.

We are grateful to see that the Oregon Housing and Community Services' 2019-20 budget prioritizes funding for programs critical to addressing the short-term impacts of Oregon's housing crisis as well as strategies to build long-term bulwarks to reverse our vulnerability to housing market volatility through the development of permanently affordable housing. Specifically, we support increased investments to assist renters in the escalating private

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housing market, additional resources to preserve existing affordable housing like the units we own and maintain, and increased investments in the Emergency Housing Account and State Homeless Assistance Program. Expanded funding of these programs is critical to ensure that every Oregonian has access to a safe, decent, affordable and sustainable place to call home.

Right now, we are forced to turn people away from successful housing programs because we have insufficient resources to assist them.

While we see the need for the full range of programming funded by the proposed OHCS Budget, **we want to specifically call out the urgency of full funding for the requested \$100 million to preserve existing affordable rental housing.** Like many housing organizations managing a portfolio of affordable apartments developed in partnership with the State of Oregon, Human Solutions' housing communities must meet ongoing debt obligations and maintenance needs, and provide needed resident services and property management through an income stream made up solely from the rents of Oregon's poorest residents. Over time, some maintenance is necessarily deferred, capital replacements delayed and some service levels fall below optimal because of the financial operating constraints at some properties – especially at those serving our lowest income families.

As our initial investments in affordable housing begin to age, residents pay the price of deferred maintenance and minimized services, and the State Oregon risks losing existing affordable housing at the very time we are desparately trying to build more. Even as we prioritize the development of new affordable housing communities, the need to reinvest at scale in our existing portfolio is urgent – we support full funding of this request from the Department.

Human Solutions further supports the Department's request for "position authority" so that they can effectively and accountably move added resources into our communities where they are badly needed. Without sufficient staff to carry out this important and time-sensitive work, we will not achieve the outcomes that Oregonians deserve from both their government and non-profit service providers like Human Solutions.

Thank you for this opportunity to share Human Solutions' strong support for the state's continued investment in affordable housing. Additional resources couldn't be more important right now.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Andy Miller".

Andy Miller, Executive Director
Human Solutions

ⁱ Oregon Department of Education 2018 School Report Cards: <https://www.oregon.gov/ode/schools-and-districts/reportcards/reportcards/Pages/default.aspx>