



March 26, 2019

Dear Co-Chairs Manning and Gomberg:

Thank you for the opportunity to offer written testimony in support of Senate Bill 5512, apportioning funds to Oregon Housing and Community Supports.

Coalition for a Healthy Oregon (COHO) is made up of seven of the state's Coordinated Care Organizations (CCOs), and serve over 400,000 Oregonians on the Oregon Health Plan (OHP). In addition, many of those in our member-CCO service areas are in the rural and frontier communities of our state which stretch from the southern border up through the Willamette Valley, as far west as Oregon coastal communities, and as far east as Klamath Falls. Without a doubt, we serve some of the state's most vulnerable populations in areas where services have historically been difficult to access.

For those reasons we are excited to see the prospective investments made by this legislation in Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH). We know that—unequivocally—housing is health care, and too often access to health care comes secondary to meeting basic human needs for those facing homelessness. It would be our hope that this investment in PSH would offer our state's most-vulnerable a more tangible solution to their most pressing health need.

One of the most pressing challenges that CCOs face in maintaining continuity of care for those on our plans is being able to get to them information that is critical to not only their eligibility and enrollment in the state's Medicaid program, but also, important notifications regarding personal and whole population health. By offering Permanent Supportive Housing, we will be removing a barrier to care that is at times impossible to overcome on one's own.

Logistically, PSH investments are good statewide policy. The cost of a single night in PSH averages to costing the system only 10% of an average emergency department stay. Those who are in need of these supportive services most often find themselves seeking services far enough into crisis that they wind up in our emergency departments, state hospitals, and sometimes county jail. Basic housing assistance for those most needing will give CCOs greater opportunities to connect this often elusive population with necessary services before they are at a point by which emergency department or corrections stays are their only options.

Thank you for your consideration of this budget proposal, we hope that you will join us in supporting Oregon Housing and Community Support by voting "Aye" on SB 5512.

Sincerely,

Mary Williams

Lobbyist
Coalition for a Healthy Oregon