



April 8, 2019

Senate Housing Committee  
900 Court Street NE  
Salem, Oregon 97301

Chair Fagan, Vice-Chair Heard and Members of the Committee:

My name is Micole Olivas-Leyva and I work at NEDCO and Willamette Neighborhood Housing Services, two nonprofit affordable housing development and counseling agencies that merged as of January 1<sup>st</sup>. NEDCO and Willamette Neighborhood provide financial education and pre-purchase counseling as well as foreclosure prevention counseling throughout our four offices, serving residents in Lane, Linn, Benton, Lincoln, Marion, and Clackamas Counties.

I am here today to talk about the importance of foreclosure prevention counseling and urge your support of SB 820 with the -1 Amendments, to fund for foreclosure counseling.

As a foreclosure prevention counselor, I work with homeowners facing a mortgage crisis every day through the Oregon Foreclosure Avoidance (OFA) Program. Julie was one of those clients. Her family was referred to NEDCO through the OFA program, after a lay-off and little job opportunities at the same wage they were facing back payments due and an inability to make the same payments moving forward. I help them get a handle on their finances, to explore options available to increase their income and analyze the options available for curing their mortgage delinquency. I advocated on their behalf with their mortgage servicer and through the OFA program we were able to come to a resolution, utilizing both a Hardest Hit Funds program as well as a mortgage modification.

This story is not unique, the need and demand for foreclosure prevention services is still present throughout Oregon. Currently, I work with an average of 10-12 new clients per week and am booked 2-3 weeks out for new appointments. Communities are continuing to recover even a decade post-recession; industries and wages have not rebounded and many Oregonians are only one event away from a mortgage crisis.

It is imperative that we preserve the homes low income Oregonians are already in to keep their families stable. Foreclosure prevention counseling does just that. We know that foreclosure prevention counseling works, families entering the Oregon Foreclosure Avoidance program come to an agreement with their mortgage servicer over 70% of the time. These agreements avoid immediate displacement of families into a rental market that is severely burdened or becoming homeless.

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Kids succeed in school when they know their family has a safe, affordable place to call home, families are more engaged in their neighborhood and community and employers can rely on a more stable workforce. We thank you for what the Legislature has previously done to support foreclosure prevention counseling funding and urge your continued support for this resource for our communities.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today.

Sincerely,

Micole Olivas-Leyva  
Asset Preservation Specialist  
NEDCO and Willamette Neighborhood Housing Services

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