



HOUSING ALLIANCE

April 24, 2019

House Committee on Rules
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Chair Holvey, Vice-Chair Wilson, Vice-Chair Williamson, members of the Committee:

I am writing to you today on behalf of the Oregon Housing Alliance in support of HB 2006 and investments in resources for renters in the private rental market.

The Oregon Housing Alliance is a coalition of ninety organizations from all parts of the state. Our members have come together with the knowledge that housing opportunity is the foundation on which all of our success is built – individual success as students, parents, workers, and community members as well as the success of our communities. We represent a diverse set of voices including non-profit housing developers, residents of affordable housing, local jurisdictions, and organizations working to meet basic needs in every corner of our state.

We believe that all Oregonians need a safe, stable, and affordable place to call home.

HB 2006 invests in critical supports for renters in the private market, including education, hotline assistance, support for people seeking safety from violence, and legal assistance. Today, we know that people who rent their homes are experiencing a wide range of challenges. They may need assistance to better understand their rights as a renter, legal assistance when facing an eviction, or help navigating a tight rental market. HB 2006 seeks to invest in these solutions to support the private rental market, and provide this critical assistance.

Included in HB 2006 are a range of investments to assist renters and landlords. These include targeted education and classes, investments in fair housing trainings, expanding Rent Well classes, navigation services for people with Housing Choice vouchers, and assistance for women and families seeking safety from violence.

Access to legal assistance is also provided in HB 2006, and is critical for people who rent their homes. Receiving an eviction notice and having to navigate our court system is incredibly stressful and intimidating. Evictions are a proven driver of homelessness and housing instability, particularly for people with lower incomes. Today, we know that the majority of renters show up unrepresented in courts, and are at a disadvantage as landlords are often represented by attorneys. According to the National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty, who studied the link between eviction and homelessness:

“Providing tenants with legal representation to help avoid an eviction and the risk of subsequent homelessness makes a significant difference in a variety of ways. First

and foremost, lawyers can ensure the eviction is lawful and that any defenses to the eviction are effectively asserted. Second, by having a lawyer as the landlords do, tenants can overcome the “credibility” gap... Third, even where a tenant lacks a defense to the eviction, there are many things a lawyer can do to secure relief for the client that may help prevent homelessness...”¹

The inclusion of legal assistance in HB 2006 is critical, and will support people with low incomes to better understand their rights, prevent unlawful evictions, and prevent homelessness.

Helping both landlords and renters to understand their rights and responsibilities is critical. HB 2006 also provides for education for renters. In Oregon, we have a renters’ rights hotline, which renters can call to receive trained assistance in communicating with their landlord over issues like repairs or rent increases, understanding and asserting their rights, and receiving referrals to additional supports. In addition, this would also support programs such as Rent Well, or Ready to Rent, which is a class for renters with barriers such as a past eviction, or problems with their credit history. Rent Well helps renters understand their rights and responsibilities, as well as how to communicate with their landlord over their history. It provides a certificate to renters upon completion, as well as access to a guarantee fund in the event of a problem.

Lastly, support for people seeking safety from violence is critical. Women often report staying with abusers because of a lack of another place to go, and women who experience homelessness report that domestic violence is a primary cause of that homelessness. Additional resources to support housing assistance for people seeking safety from violence is critical.

Investing in the basics – a safe, stable, affordable home for Oregonians with low incomes – has positive ripple effects across our state. We know what home, and what stable housing, means to all of us. When people have safe and stable housing, it has important and significant benefits. Kids are able to focus on the things that matter – being kids, doing their homework – instead of worrying about where their families will sleep at night. Parents are able to focus on work. Safe and stable housing that people can afford is key to accessing opportunity.

We urge your strong support of HB 2006.

Thank you very much for your time, and for your service to our state.

Sincerely,



Alison McIntosh
On Behalf of the Oregon Housing Alliance

¹ “Protect Tenants, Prevent Homelessness”, National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty, 2018; <https://nlchp.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/ProtectTenants2018.pdf>

Housing Alliance Members

1000 Friends of Oregon
211info
A Community Together (Lane County)
Aging in the Gorge
Benton County Health Department
Benton Habitat for Humanity
Bienestar
Bradley Angle
BRIDGE Housing
CASA of Oregon
Central City Concern
Church Women United of Lane County
City of Beaverton
City of Eugene
City of Hillsboro
City of Portland
City of Tigard
Clackamas County
Coalition of Community Health Clinics
Coalition of Housing Advocates
Common Ground OR-WA
Community Action Partnership of Oregon
Community Alliance of Tenants
Community Energy Project
Community Housing Fund
Community Partners for Affordable Housing
Community Vision
Cornerstone Community Housing
Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon
Enterprise Community Partners
Evolve Property Management
Fair Housing Council of Oregon
Farmworker Housing Development Corp.
FOOD for Lane County
Habitat for Humanity of Lincoln County
Habitat for Humanity of Oregon
Habitat for Humanity Portland/Metro East
Hacienda CDC
Housing Authority of Clackamas County
Housing Development Center
Housing Oregon
Human Solutions
Immigrant & Refugee Community Organization

Impact Northwest
JOIN
Lane County Health and Human Services
League of Women Voters of Oregon
Lincoln County
Mainstream Housing Inc.
Metro
Mid-Columbia Housing Authority
Momentum Alliance
NAYA Family Center
Neighborhood Economic Development Corp.
Neighborhood Partnerships
NeighborImpact
NeighborWorks Umpqua
Network for Oregon Affordable Housing
Nightingale Public Advocacy Project
Northwest Housing Alternatives
Northwest Pilot Project
Oregon AFSCME Council 75
Oregon Center for Christian Voices
Oregon Center for Public Policy
Oregon Coalition on Housing & Homelessness
Oregon Council on Developmental Disabilities
Oregon Food Bank
Oregon Housing Authorities
Partners for a Hunger-Free Oregon
Portland Community Reinvestment Initiatives
Proud Ground
Raphael House
REACH CDC
St. Vincent de Paul of Lane County, Inc.
ShelterCare
Sisters Habitat for Humanity
Sponsors, Inc.
SquareOne Villages
Street Roots
Transition Projects
Urban League of Portland
Washington County
Welcome Home Coalition
Willamette Neighborhood Housing Services