

April 19, 2019

TO: Senator Fred Girod, Co-Chair  
Representative Paul Holvey, Co-Chair  
Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Capitol Construction  
FR: Bob Joondeph, Policy Consultant  
RE: Support for the Housing for Mental Health Fund

Disability Rights Oregon (DRO) is the Protection and Advocacy office for Oregon. We have provided legal-based advocacy services to Oregonians with disabilities since 1977.

DRO supports the request by NAMI Oregon for \$20 million in lottery bond proceeds be deposited in the Housing for Mental Health Fund (ORS 458.380). This is a State Treasury Fund, separate and distinct from the General Fund. It is designed to incentivize the development of new housing for individuals living with serious mental illness and/or substance use disorders. This housing includes crisis respite, treatment housing, and integrated housing that provides for independent living.

The Housing for Mental Health Fund more flexible than the Governor's bond request. The Governor's request is limited to permanent supported housing: integrated and independent housing with some supports. Such housing is in critical need, but it does not meet the full array of housing needs for individuals living with serious mental illness and/or substance use disorders. People stepping down from the Oregon State Hospital may need more robust licensed treatment housing. Others need a short-term crisis respite bed which is a less costly and more effective treatment alternative to emergency rooms and acute inpatient treatment. Local housing resources for restorative treatment of defendants in the criminal justice system are critically needed to address the flood of defendants sent to the state hospital.

The Fund received \$20 million in lottery bond proceeds authorized in the 2016 Legislature. Following the incentive structure described in ORS 458.385, the Fund leveraged that \$20 million investment into \$140.5 million in development of new housing, producing 676 total units of housing with 408 reserved exclusively for individuals living with serious mental illness and/or substance use disorders. The housing reserved exclusively for individuals with serious mental illness and/or substance use disorders was tied to treatment and support services. This connection keeps people in both housing and treatment. It is a formula for success.

Thank you for the opportunity to support the request of NAMI Oregon for this critical resource.