



**Testimony in Support of HB 5505
Joint Ways & Means Subcommittee on Capital
Construction Submitted By: Sybil Hebb May 18th, 2015**

Co-Chairs Girod and Holvey, and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Oregon Law Center (OLC), thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of HB 5505, to increase funds available for the Local Innovation and Fast Track (LIFT) housing development program. This program supports critically necessary new affordable housing, including rental and homeownership opportunities, for low-income families in our communities. As one measure of addressing the depth and breadth of the housing crisis Oregonians are suffering across the state, we hope you will support \$200 million in XI-Q bonds for the LIFT program. Additionally, we hope you will support reserving up to 20% of those resources for homeownership assistance.

As you know, OLC's mission is to achieve justice for low-income communities by providing a full range of the highest quality civil legal services. One of the most important issues in the lives of our clients is the challenge to find safe, stable, and affordable housing. Housing is about opportunity.

Without safe and stable housing, it is difficult or impossible for low-income families to hold down a job, keep children in school, access neighborhood amenities, and stay healthy.

In a growing number of communities across the state, there is little to no available and affordable housing. Statewide, for every 100 very low-income families, there are only 25 units of affordable housing available.¹ This makes it virtually impossible to find housing in a new community, or to leave housing that is unsafe or in bad repair. Affordable housing is disproportionately difficult to find and maintain for minority communities, single women with children, and people with disabilities.

One example illustrating several aspects of our affordable housing crisis is an older woman from the Mid-Willamette valley who sought assistance from our office after she lost her home due to a sale of her apartment building. She was living on a fixed income, and was unable to find a unit she could afford in the neighboring area. She was forced to move into her van for a period of weeks while she continued to look for housing, while winter temperatures were continuing to drop. In order to find shelter she could afford, she was forced to move more than 200 miles away, over a mountain pass from her community. She is struggling because her health care and community connections have been disrupted as a result of the move.

The current housing crisis also has a particularly serious impact on our clients who are victims of domestic and sexual violence and their children. Without access to safe and affordable housing, victims are at greater risk of heightened abuse or homelessness. Many domestic and sexual violence shelters are unable to house families longer than 30 days. Victims in our communities often face the terrible choice between homelessness and returning to unsafe homes, risking further violence for themselves and their children regardless of their choice. In 2018, the Legislative Alliance to End Violence Against Women's statewide priority survey identified housing stability and affordability as a number one priority for survivors, and the National Network to End Domestic

¹ <https://nlihc.org/housing-needs-by-state/oregon>

Violence 2017 state census identified housing as a top unmet need for survivors in Oregon.²

Safe shelter and housing create opportunity, and are keys to breaking the cycle of poverty and violence. When children have a stable place to call home, their educational and psychological development can continue without impediment. The creation of permanent affordable housing resources in our communities can save lives, and futures.

Oregon has an opportunity to ensure greater safety for vulnerable populations, families, and communities. We respectfully urge your support of the proposed \$200 million investment in new permanent housing resources, so that we can provide all Oregonians and their children a safe place to call home.

Thank you for your service, and for the opportunity to submit testimony on this critical budget item.

² <https://nnev.org/mdocs-posts/2017-oregon/>