



The League of Women Voters of Oregon is a 100-year-old grassroots nonpartisan political organization that encourages informed and active participation in government. We envision informed Oregonians participating in a fully accessible, responsive, and transparent government to achieve the common good. LWVOR Legislative Action is based on advocacy positions formed through studies and member consensus. The League never supports or opposes any candidate or political party.

February 5, 2020

To: House Human Services and Housing Committee
Email: hhs.exhibits@oregonlegislature.gov
Rep. Alissa Keny-Guyer, Chair

Re: [HB 4002](#) - Housing and Community Services Long-Term Rent Assistance Study - **Support**

The League of Women Voters of Oregon believes that persons who are unable to work or whose earnings are inadequate or for whom jobs are not available have the right to an income and/or services to meet their basic needs for food, shelter and access to health care.

Communities throughout Oregon are experiencing a housing crisis. As a state, it is essential that we explore more options for meeting the overwhelming need.

Long-term rent assistance is a proven method for assisting rent-burdened households. The federal Section 8 voucher program currently helps some people struggling to pay rent but falls far short of the need. A similar state-run program would extend that assistance to additional households. In 2017, nearly one in four Oregon households were spending more than 50 percent of their income on rent. That magnitude of need helps explain why so many Oregon communities face the challenges of homelessness.

The League wholeheartedly supports HB 4002. It requires Housing and Community Services Department to conduct a study of the costs and benefits of instituting a long-term rent assistance program in Oregon. The bill calls out specific vulnerable populations that might be served by the program. If the Legislature adopts such a program in an upcoming session, serving the most vulnerable first should be a priority.

HB 4002 requires exploring opportunities for administrative efficiencies, which we support. A rental assistance program will require funding and the League recommends consideration of mortgage interest deduction reform and revenue from the real estate transfer tax, if a ballot measure is referred and passed in November.

Northwest Pilot Project, Oregon Center for Public Policy, JOIN, Meyer Memorial Trust, Home Forward, and the Joint Office of Homeless Services piloted a long-term rental assistance program with low-income seniors in Multnomah County. The qualitative [evaluation](#) found that participants reported improved housing security, financial stability, and better mental and physical health. Long-term rental assistance is one important support vulnerable individuals need.

The biggest challenge we face in Oregon is the lack of housing affordable to extremely low-income households. A long-term rental assistance program would help ensure more of those families and individuals have a safe and stable place to call home.

Thank you for an opportunity to discuss this bill.

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