



February 5, 2020

House Human Services and Housing Committee
900 Court Street NE
Salem OR 97301-4047

Dear Chair Keny-Guyer, Vice Chair Noble, Vice Chair Williams and members of the Committee:

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

Network for Oregon Affordable Housing (NOAH) is a non-profit community development financial institution providing financing for affordable rental housing in communities across the state. Over our 29-year history, NOAH has funded more than 225 permanent loans totaling \$277 million. These loans have helped create over 10,500 affordable rental homes.

As you well know, Oregon is experiencing a state-wide affordable housing crisis with three out of four households with extremely low incomes paying over half of their income towards rent. Studies show that households who experience such a severe rent burden are at increased risk of homelessness.

The State-Wide Shelter Study published by Oregon Housing and Community Services in August of 2019, concluded that "Homelessness, especially unsheltered homelessness, is of catastrophic proportions in Oregon. Nationally, Oregon, along with Hawaii and California, had the highest rate of individuals experiencing homelessness, with 50 or more individuals experiencing homelessness per 10,000 individuals. Oregon is one of four states in which more than half (61 percent) of all people experiencing homelessness were found in unsheltered locations".

One of the most effective strategies to respond to, and prevent homelessness, is through long-term rent assistance programs which offer low income households the opportunity to secure decent and safe affordable housing. However, it is well documented that current levels of rental assistance are insufficient to meet the tremendous need. It's a fact that Federal rental assistance programs serve just one in four households that are eligible for long term rental subsidies.

Long term rent assistance programs increase housing options for low income households providing stability for seniors and people with disabilities who live on fixed incomes. Long term rent assistance is also one of the most effective tools for preventing homelessness by keeping people living on the bubble housed and off the street.

In Oregon we can adopt a new, flexible housing voucher program with fewer barriers and lower costs, that will supplement existing federal rental assistance programs. HB 4002 would direct Oregon Housing and Community Services to conduct a study of the costs and benefits of instituting a long-term rent assistance program in Oregon. It would provide funding for the study which would produce analysis needed to inform the design and function of a new state rental assistance program.

I urge the Committee to support HB 4002 as it will provide valuable information needed to guide the design and implementation of a new state funded long term rental assistance program that will benefit low-income households and prevent homelessness for some of our most vulnerable neighbors.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Rob Prasch', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Rob Prasch, Preservation Director
Network for Oregon Affordable Housing