



February 11, 2020

My name is Britt Conroy, and I serve as Public Policy Director at Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon. EMO is an association comprising of 15 denominations and over 150 congregations, organizations, and interfaith partners, connecting hundreds of thousands of diverse members of the faith community all across the state.

EMO supports HJR 203, which proposes an amendment to the Oregon Constitution authorizing a new state real property transfer charge.

The EMO board's support for adding this revenue option to our state's housing policy toolkit stems not simply from the perspectives of board members as faith leaders from across the state, but as managers of an organization that offers housing to homeless youth through our Second Home program, housing support to survivors of domestic violence who are clients at our Russian Oregon Social Services program, housing to residents at our affordable housing complex in North Portland and housing to newly arrived refugees who start new lives through our SOAR Refugee Resettlement program.

We see daily what Oregon's housing crisis looks like for our communities, particularly children and youth who are experiencing homelessness:

- Oregon has the highest rate of K-12 homelessness in the country, with one in six of these young people being homeless and separated from their parents;
- Beaverton School District staff shop for sleeping bags and tents to give to homeless students and families because we have failed to invest sufficiently in housing supports for those most in need;
- In Tillamook County, we have heard repeatedly that school bus stops have been permanently established alongside rural patches of forest where families are living in tents; and
- Nationally, as many as 50% of youth aging out of foster care become homeless within a few years.

On behalf of our clients and in embrace of our responsibility for one another, we thank this Committee for considering HJR 203.

Sincerely,

Britt Conroy  
Public Policy Director  
Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon

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