



February 14, 2020

To: Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Capital Construction

Attention: Co-Chair Girod, Co-Chair Holvey, and Members of the Committee

I am writing on behalf of Human Solutions in East Portland/East Multnomah County to convey our strong support for SB 5201 and the Speakers request for \$50 million in General Obligation, Article XI-Q bonds to build affordable homes across Oregon and \$20 million for Lottery Bonds to maintain existing affordable homes.

Human Solutions' mission is to counter the forces that keep people and communities in poverty by building relationships and assets that create opportunity - today and for future generations. Specifically, we *partner* with people and communities impacted by poverty so they can achieve long-term housing and economic security, we *invest* in affordable housing and community assets that contribute to strong, inclusive neighborhoods, and we *advocate* with our community for policies and investments that expand housing and economic opportunity, eliminate wealth inequality and end poverty. East Portland/East Multnomah County, Oregon is our home and the heart of our investments, advocacy and programs.

Since 1988 Human Solutions has been working with individuals and families who seek out our services to reach housing stability and economic security. The individuals and families we work either have no income or very low to low incomes and are often experiencing or on the verge of experiencing homelessness. They often face significant barriers to stability and it is our role to support them as they work to remove those barriers, find stable housing, and, ultimately to thrive. To do this, we offer a continuum of services that fall into three main categories:

1. Emergency support for those experiencing or at risk of homelessness,
2. Assistance finding and maintaining stable permanent housing, which includes our own development and management of affordable housing (currently 720 units with 170 more in the pipeline), and
3. Programs to boost earned income.

We do this work because we believe that every Oregonian can and should have a safe, affordable place to call home; housing is the foundation of all other stability, opportunity and happiness.

In our service area – East Portland//East Multnomah County – 60% of the population is rent burdened (compared to 49% across Portland), meaning they pay more than 30% of their income on rent. In addition, area schools have very high rates of poverty¹ (63-86% across four east metro districts) and are relatively higher than nearby Portland Public Schools (38%).¹

We are working hard at Human Solutions to come up with creative solutions to the housing crisis that impacts so many in our community. We are developing projects with significant units of Permanent Supportive Housing so that families can receive both housing and supportive services, however these important projects are very expensive to build and maintain. We, and our partners in this work, desperately need more resources in order to continue our critical work.

We have a portfolio of affordable housing projects that house vulnerable and low-income families in large family-sized units throughout East Portland and East Multnomah County. We owe it to these families to maintain their housing at the highest standards so that they and their children can thrive, and to do that we need more government investment in preservation. Truth is, we need more resources in many areas to ensure that every Oregonian has access to a safe and affordable place to call home. **Much of the work we are doing is successful, but we cannot do enough of it with the resources currently available.** Every day we turn people away from our programs because we have insufficient resources to assist them.

Thank you for this opportunity to share Human Solutions' strong support for the state's continued investment in affordable housing. Additional resources couldn't be more important right now. We thank you for your hard work and service and for your consideration of our request to provide additional funding for both new construction and preservation of critical affordable housing projects.

Sincerely,



Andy Miller, Executive Director
Human Solutions

¹ Oregon Department of Education 2018 School Report Cards: <https://www.oregon.gov/ode/schools-and-districts/reportcards/reportcards/Pages/default.aspx>