

December 18, 2020

Subject: Emergency Session 3, LC 18

Honorable Members – Oregon Senate and Housing of Representatives

Peter Courtney, Tina Kotek, Fred Girod, Christine Drazan  
Members of the Committee

I write to you with strong support for LC 18, which includes rent relief and eviction prevention for thousands of lower income Oregonians and the many impacted by the shutdown of the economy due to Covid-19.

Established in 1982, Northwest Housing Alternatives is a nonprofit community-based mission-focused organization that provides opportunity through affordable housing. We have nearly 2,000 family home apartments and group homes in portfolio in sixteen counties across Oregon, with some 800 in the development pipeline in communities such as Ontario, Florence, Tigard, and Portland. We also operate the only full-service family shelter in Clackamas County, moving 30 families in the past 12 months from homelessness to permanent housing with supportive case management services and financial assistance.

During the pandemic we have been working directly with residents to ensure no one becomes homeless due to income loss. Though people are not able to pay full rent, many pay some portion. Prior to legislation which enacted an eviction moratorium, we made a policy decision not to evict anyone due to non-payment of rent, and we do not expect people to make payments over time to catch up. Our portfolio reserves have been well maintained because we invest in people over profit, so our properties can withstand certain financial losses.

We know this would be a financial burden to families, seniors and Veterans who reside with us. We want these households to emerge from this pandemic and economic downturn whole and as able as possible to quickly return to focus on their continued health and well-being, on their kids completing school, and on their own self-determined paths toward fulfillment. We believe that debt loads of people and families in lower income communities is a dragging anchor to people who otherwise are ready to set sail.

We have clear policy choices to make right now that equal to the pandemic will have lasting impacts in lower income communities, and particularly in Black, Brown, Indigenous, and communities of color. You have the opportunity right now to change past practices that have had devastating disparate racial impacts in housing outcomes and in wealth attainment.

Please do not let people become homeless. Please do not let people become saddled or further anchored with debt. You can create new policy that drives toward equitable outcomes that does not further exacerbate racial disparities we see in housing, income, and wealth. It is within your doing.

Please let me know if you have any questions about Northwest Housing Alternatives or my testimony here.

Thank you for your service and leadership,

Trell Anderson

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Trell Anderson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Executive Director

CC: Margaret Salazar, Executive Director, Oregon Housing and Community Services