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December 11, 2021

RE: Need to Protect Oregon Renters Through Oregon's Winter

Co-Chairs Beyer and Fahey, Co-Vice-Chairs Knopp and Wallan, and Members of the Joint Interim Committee on the 2nd Special Session of 2021:

We are Oregon's Housing Stability Council, providing leadership over the policy direction of Oregon Housing and Community Services (OHCS). Under the leadership of Director Margaret Salazar, OHCS has delivered more than \$381M in rental assistance this year, serving tens of thousands of Oregonians. Compare that to the ~\$17M in rental assistance in 2019 and the ~\$80M in rental assistance in 2020, the scale is astounding. And more is needed to protect Oregon's renters from eviction this winter. We ask for your support of improved policy and increased investment in Oregonians:

- **Invest \$100M in the Oregon Emergency Rental Assistance Program (OERAP):** The need for rental assistance outmatches federal resources; additional funds are needed to allow OERAP to accept new applications.
- **Extend Oregon's Safe Harbor Period and Provide More Notice:** We urge you to correct the enduring mismatch between the federal program regulations, volume of need, and the state 60-day safe harbor policy by removing the arbitrary timeframe.
- **Improve rental assistance process and eviction prevention planning:** OHCS staff have done incredible work with shoestring staffing and resources. This \$5M investment will increase capacity to better serve Oregonians now and plan for the long-term.
- **Provide \$100M to prevent evictions:** As the OERAP and other federal emergency rental assistance programs phase out, additional resources are needed to provide a soft landing for communities. Importantly, this includes \$20M for longer-term programs and evaluations to inform future legislative investments.

As the whirlwind of emergency programs and resources continue to flow throughout the state, we encourage you to think strategically about the long term. We are glad to see additional investments that will serve communities throughout the biennium, and we are most excited about the groundwork this package lays for the 2023-25 biennium. Oregon must be intentional in planning to ensure equity and racial justice are embedded in program design. It's clear that Oregon must expand eviction prevention infrastructures, you have the opportunity to begin that work with the December 13th Special Session.

Along with this infrastructure, the Housing Stability Council is eager to see upstream investments in Oregonians so programs like OERAP are not needed to keep families in their homes. We have a shared obligation to the long-term housing stability for all Oregonians.

Thank you,
Chair Claire Hall, on behalf of the Oregon Housing Stability Council

The Housing Stability Council works to establish and support OHCS' strategic direction, foster constructive partnerships across the state, set policy and issue funding decisions, and overall lend their unique expertise to the policy and program development of the agency.