

March 29, 2021

Joint Subcommittee on Transportation and Economic Development
900 Court Street NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

JWMTR 3-29-2021 8:00am Public Testimony

Co-Chair Beyer, Co-Chair Gomberg and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to share my family's experience with the Down Payment Assistance program. My name is Chelsea Louie and along with my husband and our young daughter we have been working with DevNW to purchase our first home. My husband and I both hold college degrees and have worked in the Social Services field serving our community for much of our adult lives. We learned about the Down Payment Assistance Program in our area while referring our clients to other services the organization offered. We realized that this was not unique to our family that many of our colleagues, while employed, were still unable to purchase a home due to the lack of funds for a down payment. For us, the financial burden of college debt, the high cost of renting in Lane County, the cost of child care for our young child along with the increasing purchase prices of houses and thus increasing down payment cost always made purchasing a home just out of reach.

As an interracial, intercultural family having a home that is safe is our top priority. A little over a year ago my husband was attacked outside of our rental home by a racist man we did not know. The man returned several times to our home over a two-week period and was eventually arrested. The impact of this experience left us feeling unsafe in our home and in our neighborhood. We felt constrained by being in a rental house to put the safety measures in place we now felt were essential. We began to look for a different rental home and again were hit with the reality of the high rental costs. We decided to pursue the down payment assistance program; realizing that owning our own home not only had financial benefits, in helping us to build long term wealth, but more importantly to us the social and safety benefits.

While the funds provided through the Down Payment Assistance program make owning a home possible, the program offered us much more. They provided a course about homeownership; bringing in professionals in the industry to give us current information and walking us in detail through the entire process from beginning to end. We also met with their financial counselor who helped guide us to ensure that not only could we purchase a home but that our long-term financial wellness was in mind. Lastly, we hit several hurdles that we had not anticipated in our home buying process and our DevNW team, with Luis at the helm, were instantly there to provide the support and information we needed to move forward. We will be closing on our first home in May in a neighborhood we had the opportunity to choose and feel safe in, this is powerful.

As we imagine our future, we look forward to repaying the program for the assistance we received. I hope you will consider providing additional funding for Down Payment Assistance programs so hard working families, like mine, can also enjoy the financial, social and safety benefits of owning your own home.

Chelsea Louie