

Testimony of Anneliese Koehler, State and Regional Affairs Advisor
On House Bill 5505
Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Capital Construction
April 9, 2021



Metro is the elected regional government that serves nearly 1.7 million people in the 24 cities and three counties of the Portland metropolitan area. We provide a broad range of public services that includes land use and transportation planning, solid waste and recycling operations, housing and homeless services, management of parks and natural areas, and operation of major visitor facilities like the Oregon Convention Center and the Oregon Zoo.

While the housing crisis has long been a reality for many marginalized communities, particularly communities of color, it has increasingly become the top issue in our communities over the last decade. It is a national issue, a statewide issue and a regional issue. Metro has stepped up to address this crisis with a particular focus on those with the lowest incomes who are experiencing the most acute needs. Metro's voters passed a \$652.8 million housing bond in 2018, and just this past spring, they approved the nation's single largest per capita investment in supportive housing and homeless services. Taken together, these measures will be game changers for our region and finally match public investment to the urgent need to address chronic homelessness.

These policies and public investments have already begun to make an impact in our communities. However, true long-term success requires further action at the state level as well. Housing security in our state will only be achieved when all partners work together collaboratively and multiple investments are leveraged to address this critical issue. HB 5505 provides an opportunity to do just that by advancing key investments in housing and homelessness. We urge the Legislature to adopt the following funding priorities:

- \$250 million in general obligation bonds for LIFT
- \$50 million in General Obligation Bonds and resources for permanent supportive housing

For the 2021 session, the Metro Council's priorities call for supporting legislation that increases state housing funding, helps end homelessness and leverages multiple governmental investments in housing and homelessness. The funding priorities outlined above work to achieve these goals and we urge the Legislature to adopt them and help ensure that those most impacted by the pandemic remained stably housed today and into the future.