



April 8, 2021

Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Capital Construction  
Oregon State Legislature  
900 Court Street NE  
Salem, OR 97301

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 5505, and the inclusion of \$250 million for affordable housing and \$50 million for permanent supportive housing in Article XI-Q General Obligation bonds. Human Solutions' mission is to counter the forces that cause conditions like poverty and homelessness. We accomplish our mission by *partnering* with people and communities impacted by poverty so they can achieve long-term housing and economic security, *by investing* in affordable housing and community assets that build vibrant neighborhoods, and by *advocating* with our community for policies and investments that expand housing and economic opportunities, eliminate wealth inequality and end poverty. East Portland/East Multnomah County, Oregon is our home and the heart of our investments, advocacy and programs. 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 opportunity and happiness.

Prior to the COVID pandemic, Oregon was already experiencing a housing crisis, and too many of our neighbors and community members were experiencing housing instability – especially our BIPOC neighbors who continue to experience gross disparities in housing access and stability after generations of discriminatory and racist housing policies in Oregon and across the country. In the 2019-20 school year, over 21,000 kids experienced homelessness at some point during the year, with their families. We know the pandemic only exacerbated our housing crisis and disproportionately impacted the housing and financial security of BIPOC families.

Since 2015, the Legislature has committed millions in general obligation bonds to the LIFT program, and over 3,600 affordable homes have been or are being built. Human Solutions has applied for LIFT funds in a recent OHCS funding cycle and hopes to leverage these funds to build badly-needed affordable family housing in Gresham, including Permanent Supportive Housing units that will help families who have experienced long-term homelessness permanent transition to a stable, sustainable home. With additional resources, we can support more of this work and build projects across Oregon to provide safe and stable places to call home for members of our communities. Investments in affordable housing are investments in jobs, infrastructure and racial justice because they lead to outcomes that benefit communities who have been systematically deprived of opportunity and justice.

In East Multnomah County, the heart of our investment and service area, the lack of decent affordable housing combined with high poverty rates causes families to suffer the trauma of eviction and homelessness and impacts local schools by causing school mobility rates over 30% - meaning that a third of the families that start a given school year have been forced to move by spring. High school mobility means



children lose critical education time, teachers lose classroom continuity and frequent family moves disrupt the social cohesion that we know is necessary for healthy childhood and development. When we deepen our investments in affordable housing we commit ourselves to a more equitable future in which kids have real opportunities to be kids – to live in the same home and neighborhood through their childhood, to stay in their school, nurture friendships and interests, to know real community and to know the way home – because they have a home to return to at the end of each day.

We know affordable housing is an investment that pays dividends for generations. LIFT and Supportive Housing are investments in the children of Oregon, the future of Oregon and in racial justice for Oregon. We urge your support for the inclusion of \$250 million for affordable housing and \$50 million for permanent supportive housing in Article XI-Q General Obligation bonds in SB 5505.

Thank you for your time and for your service to the State of Oregon.

Sincerely,

Andy Miller, Executive Director  
Human Solutions