

April 22, 2021

Testimony to the Ways and Means Committee, Catherine R. Biscoe
Transportation/Economic Development Subcommittee

RE: Investment in safe, stable and affordable housing for all Oregonians.

Co-Chair Johnson, Co-Chair Steiner-Hayward, Co-Chair Rayfield, and members of the Committee.

My name is Catherine Biscoe. I am a 17 yr. resident of Philomath, a small community in Western Benton County. I am here today as a Philomath City Councilor, a member of the Benton County/Corvallis HOPE Advisory Board and a 12-year volunteer and former program manager of a low-income food service provider in Western Benton County. I continue to see first-hand the effect of housing insecurity and how it harms our families and our children. *It is critical that you pass a budget that prioritizes safe, stable and affordable homes for all Oregonians.*

I also come to share a unique perspective of living homeless in our Oregon communities. I can speak to the countless nights in vehicles or being unsheltered and in the rain. I know what it is like to go without food or water and the bone-chilling cold because of no heat or electricity. I have borrowed public bathrooms to brush my teeth, wash my clothes and potty train my daughter. Sadly, I understand the threats of sheltering at night amongst predators. I cannot emphasize strongly enough, the consequences of homelessness, and how it influences Oregon's families and children, often for lifetimes.

These roles and experiences compel me to speak before you today, to advocate for those who cannot speak for themselves. I urge you to provide funding that increases Oregon's ability to provide more equitable and affordable housing, that will meet the needs of all income levels, and demographics. Each dollar spent, can bring us one step closer to taking a family off the street and providing them the safety and shelter of a home.

I also ask for investments in providing guidance and resources for our local elected officials. Planning tools and increased technical assistance, along with proven policy recommendations will ensure that housing is not a backburner topic but is front and center for every community.

It is only through this collaboration of local, regional, and state governments, and strong leadership, that we will empower our communities to change.

Committee Members, addressing Oregon's housing crisis with urgency is the humane, ethical, and just action to pursue. **It is no longer the thing that we should do... it is simply *the thing that we must do.***

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

Sincerely,

Catherine R. Biscoe
Philomath City Council
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