

Co-Chair Johnson, Co-Chair Steiner-Hayward, Co-Chair Rayfield, and Members of the Committee, my name is Ellen Burns and I live in Gladstone, Oregon. I am a member of King of Kings Lutheran Church, which is a member organization of Metropolitan Alliance for Common Good. I have been working, along with my congregation, other local churches, and members of the community for several years to address the crises of homelessness and the threat of homelessness in our community.

I talked with a young man seeking somewhere to stay who came to the church on a winter night not quite cold enough to trigger the opening of seasonal temporary shelter. I know an elderly woman who had to curtail spending on activities and food to meet an increase in rent. I have a friend, a single mom with two teenage daughters, who worked as a waitress until Covid19 eliminated her job. She sent the girls to area food pantries to make ends meet and keep a roof over their heads.

At this time, in this state, housing is THE core issue. It impacts physical health and mental wellbeing, educational and job opportunities, and hope for a way out of desperate poverty.

Oregon needs more money for a comprehensive housing program:

- Rental assistance to prevent families from losing their homes and uprooting their children, necessitating moving from school to school.
- Emergency shelters for immediate needs and disaster relief
- Transitional housing with wrap around services for youth and adults
- More safe and affordable homes
- Assistance with home ownership

There are bills currently in the legislature that attempt to solve some of these problems. Funding is critical to move forward in support of our neighbors, to treat them with compassion and to provide humane living conditions rather than a tarp in the woods, a tent along the highway, or a piece of cardboard on a sidewalk.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of the Ways & Means Committee Road Sessions.

Ellen Burns