



February 1, 2022

Senator Jama, Chair
Senator Anderson, Vice-Chair
Members of the Senate Housing Committee
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court Street NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

Dear Chair Jama and Vice-Chair Anderson,

I'm writing on behalf of the Salem Housing Authority in enthusiastic support of Senate Bill 1557, which would provide our agency funds to keep the residents stable in their existing rentals and allow for time for them to transition to other affordable housing. Waitlists are long in our market for affordable housing. The financial support offered residents from SB 1557 would help as an emergency stop gap and serve as a pilot program for other agencies facing similar issues.

On December 31, 2021, the 224-unit Orchard Park housing development in Salem lost its affordable housing status and exited the program, placing residents of the 224 units – including more than 80 voucher clients – at risk of being priced out of their homes. Despite Salem Housing Authority and agency partners' attempt to execute our first right of refusal to purchase the building and continue its affordability, the offer was rejected.

Salem is lacking critical affordable housing stock. Many of our waiting lists are closed to new applicants and, as it stands, the wait time is 1.5 years to 8.5 years to reach the top of the list. We have implemented resources at the Housing Authority to assist in navigation of this difficult rental market. Legislation like SB 1557 could assist us with our efforts and buy us the much-needed time to make an impact.

If passed, SB 1557 would support the residents of buildings whose owners have chosen to allow the restrictions to expire, rather than continuing to maintain properties as affordable housing. SB 1557 provides a small rent assistance subsidy to help the current tenants in those affordable housing units remain in their homes, so they aren't displaced due to the increased rent burden.

The Salem Housing Authority is requesting your support for Senate Bill 1557.

Sincerely,

Jessica Blakely

Jessica Blakely
Salem Housing Authority, Asset Manager