

Submitter: Mandee Seeley
On Behalf Of: Residents Organizing for Change
Committee: Senate Committee On Housing and Development
Measure: SB603

My name is Mandee Seeley, I use she/they pronouns, and I'm in Sisters. I have lived experience of being unhoused and now give voice to that experience on the boards of both my local Continuum of Care and Public Housing Authority. I'm submitting my testimony today as a proud member of Residents Organizing for Change aka ROC. I was involved in the creation of SB 603, a crucial grassroots bill.

Our main goal at ROC is to ensure that every Oregonian has access to safe and stable housing, and that's because a majority of our members have been without it. I spent three years unhoused with my family, including two small children, living in the Deschutes National Forest. An opportunity like the People's Housing Assistance Fund could have eased the burden that experience put on our lives and helped us obtain housing earlier. I know a thousand dollars a month doesn't sound like much, and supporting a thousand people isn't nearly enough when at least half a million of our neighbors live in poverty. Still, this pilot program could be the difference between those thousand people obtaining or keeping a roof over their heads.

That's what our research showed when we created this bill. The top five uses of stimulus funds in Oregon and in cities around the country who have implemented similar programs included food, utilities, household items or personal care, rent, and savings. And so, while this study will focus on the results of housing achievement and stability, cash assistance like this allows people to find better jobs, gives parents more time with their kids, lowers food security, is cost-effective, and helps lift people out of poverty. As I'm sure you are already aware, poverty is the root cause of so many other issues.

Home is the foundation on which we build our lives. Without that stability, we live in survival mode, and everything else becomes harder to obtain, even for those who don't have many barriers to start with. Data has consistently shown that when people are given cash directly with flexibility, they use it to meet their basic needs. Basic, the bare minimum. We all need those basic needs just to survive, and many Oregonians are living without them, right now.

This would be the first statewide program like this in the country and hopefully inspire other states to follow suit. People are suffering and this is one small way that you can help us do something about it. Please support our efforts and let us prove that this method works, those thousand Oregonians from throughout your districts need you right now. Thank you for your time.