

Submitter: Julia Nielsen

On Behalf
Of:

Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On
Transportation and Economic Development

Measure: SB5511

Dear Committee,

My name is Rev. Julia Nielsen, and I am the Executive Organizer of the statewide Leaven Community Land & Housing Coalition, a interfaith collective of more than 50 faith communities across Oregon devoted to using our land to build diverse affordable housing. One hundred percent of our congregations additionally serve unhoused and unstably housed people as core parts of our outreach services, from food pantries to rental support to advocacy.

Congregations like ours get calls on a daily basis from neighbors needing a place to live and basic services such as food, healthcare, and childcare. How better to answer the problem than with a rental application and a home, rather than yet another 'I'm sorry I can't do more to help because there is no money and no available services to refer you to or give at this time'? Yet this is where we are. Faith communities are often the safety net under the safety net. There is simply not enough we can do to save our communities and neighbors - many of us employed full-time - from houselessness, hunger, and mental health crises for which there are simply not enough resources.

This is clearly an enormous systemic gap that needs an immediate systemic bridge. The Governor's budget is one such bridge, and we are strongly in support of this important and immediate solution to our crisis and encourage you to do so as well. Your urgent action is critical.