



March 3, 2023

**Re: *Support for \$100 million in Emergency Rent Assistance Homelessness Prevention funds***

Co-Chair Woods, Co-Chair Gomberg, and members of the committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in strong support of SB 5511 and \$100 million in homeless prevention funds. My name is Jenny Lee, and I am the Deputy Director at the Coalition of Communities of Color, an alliance of culturally specific community-based organizations dedicated to collective action for racial justice.

Housing is the foundation of wellbeing for individuals, families, and communities. This foundation is eroded by our state's housing crisis that has been decades in the making, and the scarcity of affordable units has left many Oregonians struggling to pay the rent and have enough left over to pay for food, medicine, and other essentials. And all too many Oregonians have been unable to cover this gap and have lost their homes, or are at imminent risk of doing so. Oregonians of color are more likely to be impacted by this housing crisis across the spectrum, from lower rates of homeownership to increased rates of homelessness for Black and Native American/Alaska Native Oregonians. We must redouble our efforts to meet the acute needs faced by Oregonians across our state. Specifically, we lift up our support of \$100 million requested in POP #90 to:

- Reduce unsheltered homelessness this year;
- Rehouse people experiencing homelessness in the longer term;
- Build and preserve more housing units statewide

Significant funding for emergency rent assistance and eviction prevention to community action agencies and culturally specific programs across the state is an essential element of homelessness prevention. Many of our coalition's members are service providers who work tirelessly to help individuals and families access and stay in housing through rent assistance, eviction prevention services, wraparound services, and other supports needed to maintain stable homes. Culturally specific services are critical to establishing stability and opportunity by providing individuals and families with support from trusted organizations. For people at risk of losing their homes, accessing services designed to meet cultural and linguistic needs provide critical support during a distressing and often traumatic time. These services can help mitigate the stress and trauma of housing instability and homelessness and set community members on a path toward stability and wellbeing.

These funds are urgently needed due to the state's high rates of homelessness, scarce inventory of affordable rental homes, and disparities in homeownership. Black, Indigenous, Latine, and Pacific Islander Oregonians are all more likely to rent their homes as a result of income and wealth disparities, additional systemic inequities, and discriminatory laws. We also support resources to increase homeownership opportunities to help build intergenerational wealth and reduce disparities for Oregonians of color in homeownership.

We express our gratitude for the commitment shown by Governor Kotek, legislative leadership, and this committee to move swiftly with an urgent homelessness and housing package to begin to address immediate needs. We strongly urge passage of \$100 million in emergency rental assistance and eviction prevention resources in addition to investments in affordable homes and homeownership to help keep families housed and provide the services needed for Black, Indigenous, and other people of color Oregonians to achieve stability and ultimately thrive. We cannot wait to invest in these critical interventions in our housing crisis and thank you for taking meaningful action now.