



**Testimony in Support of SB 5511
Cynthia Aguilar-Arizmendi, Unite Oregon
March 3, 2023**

Co-chairs Woods and Gomberg, and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of our 46,000 members in support of Senate Bill 5511. Specifically, I submit this testimony to support the investment of \$100 million in POP #90 for homelessness prevention funding. My name is Cynthia Aguilar-Arizmendi (she/her) and I am the Housing Justice Policy Coordinator at Unite Oregon. Our organization is led by black, indigenous, people of color, immigrants and refugees, rural communities, and people experiencing poverty. We were founded on the premise of mobilizing with the capacity to advance racial justice in various areas, including housing justice.

This year we held a membership summit in which Housing was voted our top priority in both policy and community services. We have been asked for help with paying for rent, resources, education, and translation to attempt to stay housed. We appreciate this committee and leadership's recognition of the importance of moving swiftly with an urgent homelessness package to begin addressing immediate needs, like rental assistance.

Oregonians across the state, including some of our members, have shared their stories about losing a home and becoming homeless. This is a horrific experience that feeds into the poverty cycle. Rents across the state have increased significantly and it has become nearly impossible for people to keep up with the true cost of living, especially low-income communities of color. Communities already facing historical and systemic barriers to jobs, housing, health care, opportunity and wealth are paying an unfair price for Oregon's unfair housing options. When housing takes up more than half of your income, it takes one incident to push you over the edge and a majority of Oregonians are just one paycheck short of facing homelessness.

Our members support SB 5511 because housing is a right that has frequently been framed as a privilege and Oregonians deserve to be housed. An investment like this would greatly benefit Oregonians across the state and help make sure they continue to have a roof over their heads and rehouse people who currently do not.

Senate Bill 5511 will provide critical funding in the Oregon Housing and Community Services budget in order to:



- Prevent homelessness;
- Rehouse people experiencing homelessness; and
- Build and preserve more affordable housing units statewide

Unite Oregon strongly urges the passage of \$100 million in emergency rental assistance and eviction prevention resources.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Cynthia Aguilar-Arizmendi
Policy Coordinator
Unite Oregon