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Date March 21, 2023

TO: The Honorable Rep. Maxine Dexter, Chair
The Honorable Rep. Mark Gamba, Vice-Chair
The Honorable Rep. Jeffrey Helfrich, Vice-Chair
House Committee on Housing and Homelessness

FROM: Gabriela Goldfarb, Environmental Public Health Section Manager
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SUBJECT: HB 2987-2, Relating to the Healthy Homes Grant Program

Chair Dexter, Vice-Chairs Gamba and Helfrich, members of the committee, for the record, I am Gabriela Goldfarb, Environmental Public Health Section Manager in the Public Health Division of the Oregon Health Authority (OHA). While OHA has no position on House Bill 2987, we have worked with Representative Pam Marsh to provide technical information about how this bill with the -2 proposed amendment affects OHA's implementation of the Healthy Homes Grant Program (HHGP) enacted by the 2021 legislature.

The Healthy Homes Grant Program directs OHA to provide financial assistance for repair, rehabilitation and health and safety upgrades to residential housing occupied by members of low income communities and communities with environmental justice factors. The legislature established the Healthy Homes Repair Fund for this purpose and directed OHA to award grants from the Fund to a wide array of eligible third-party entities to carry out the work. These entities are local governments, local housing authorities, coordinated care organizations, Oregon federally recognized Tribes, non-profit organizations, and certain programs administered by utilities. Grantees must in turn provide financial assistance to low-income households to repair and rehabilitate dwellings.

The 2021 law capped combined administrative and program delivery costs at 15%. HB2987 with the -2 amendment instead allows OHA to set in rule the administrative reimbursement rate for use by entities funded under the Healthy Homes Grant Program.

The 2021 statute established an Interagency Task Force on Healthy Homes consisting of nine Governor’s appointees and six state agency appointees to identify barriers to healthy homes, strategies to overcome those barriers and ways leverage resources to advance healthy home goals. A top concern reflected in the task force final report, which OHA has submitted to the committee, was that the 15% cap for combined administrative and program delivery costs would prevent organizations from applying for grant funding. HB 2987 with the proposed -2 amendment addresses this concern.

The -2 proposed amendment also adds an emergency clause. This change is important because OHA is about to launch the rulemaking for the program, with a rules advisory committee scheduled to meet between April and July of this year. Absent the emergency clause, OHA would have to maintain the 15% cap, which could significantly constrain applications for the first grant opportunity this fall, particularly in rural areas where many organizations experience severe workforce capacity.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on HB 2987.