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March 21, 2023

RE: SUPPORTING SB 2 TO INCREASE HOUSING SUPPLY

Dear Senators:

On behalf of Blanchet House, I write to express our full support of the SB 2, and I urge you to vote in support. Oregon's housing crisis requires an all-hands-on deck approach. Currently, there are 1.5 million owner occupied homes with a spare bedroom available. A 2% penetration could house 30,000 people affordably and provide financial resilience for vulnerable homeowners who are at risk of losing their homes. SB 2 is a welcome step toward increasing the immediate housing supply and building financial resilience for mid-low-income homeowners.

Further, 40% of all Oregonians 65yo+ say they are at risk of losing their homes. Home ownership is considered to be the American dream and one of the paths towards intergenerational wealth. However, the goal of home ownership and building wealth is quickly being threatened as our seniors, most of whom are on fixed incomes, find themselves severely mortgage burdened, and struggling to keep their homes. SB 2 is a unique opportunity to provide support for mid-low-income homeowners, as well as mid-low income renters, in one fell swoop and increase housing supply for all.

Blanchet House provides free meals, clothing, and other resources to persons experiencing homelessness. We also operate two transitional housing programs, one in Old Town, Portland, and our Blanchet Farm program in Carlton, Oregon. We know first hand how essential it is for people to have a safe, dependable housing if they are going to succeed in their endeavors. Remove the stress that comes with unstable housing, and people can focus on gaining and sustaining employment (or further their education or training). We also know that safe, stable housing allows people to at last tend to acute or chronic injury, disability, or illness. For persons in addiction recovery, safe and dependable housing is a prerequisite to being successful in their journey.

Home sharing will provide such housing to many in our community. Moreover, by pairing persons with housing insecurity with stable homeowners, home sharing will address the community insecurity that houseless persons and others in poverty experience. There is a crisis of loneliness and isolation among our houseless and poverty communities, and this crisis has a detrimental effect on their mental and physical health and wellbeing. This is why community and social relationships is one of the five social determinants of health.

We appreciate your efforts to secure Oregonians' health and well-being through safe and stable housing. We would welcome the opportunity to tell you more about why we support this and other needed reforms to protect Oregonians from foreclosure, homelessness, and instability.



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Sincerely,

Scott Kerman

Scott Kerman
Executive Director