



April 8, 2023

Support for SB5506

Co-chairs Steiner and Sanchez and members of the committee:

My name is Kemp Shuey, Executive Director of Community Action serving Washington County, and I respectfully ask that you support the following budget requests this session, critical to helping assist Oregonians falling behind on rent, utilities, and groceries:

Emergency Housing (SB 918) - In the midst of a housing crisis, it is critical that we increase funding for emergency housing by prioritizing an **additional investment of \$9.5 million** in the Emergency Housing Account (EHA) and the State Homeless Assistance Program (SHAP):

- These funding sources are the primary capacity and sheltering grants being used throughout local communities, typically in partnership with other local community service providers;
- These programs have not been increased since 2019, creating capacity and fiscal challenges that impact our ability to serve vulnerable populations throughout the state during this crisis as costs for labor, basic operations, materials, and rental assistance continue to increase due to inflation;
- These funds are especially **critical to serving rural communities and ensuring geographic equity**; and
- The EHA provides flexible funding needed to match and leverage other funding sources, like federal HUD grants, which require a 25% match.

Our organization is also supportive of a \$25 million investment to create a dedicated stream of funding for culturally specific and culturally responsive organizations.

Drinking Water Assistance (HB 3125) - Due to the pandemic, water utility arrearages have increased significantly with more families needing assistance to afford safe drinking water. Using federal relief funds, the Community Action network set up programs locally to help 9,500 families (over 25,700 individuals) throughout the state from having services disconnected. In Washington County, we have been able to help 1,400 families avoid disconnection. With federal funding exhausted, **we respectfully ask that the state invest \$15 million** to allow us to continue to provide critical assistance to prevent families from losing access to safe drinking water.

Oregon Hunger Response Fund (SB 5506) - As families choose between paying for rent, utilities, and food, they often choose to go hungry. We ask that you prioritize **\$9 million for the Oregon Hunger Response Fund** to maintain critical funding for emergency food distribution efforts throughout the state. This bill includes a **one-time 22 million investment in food distribution infrastructure** to ensure greater capacity to accept, store, and transport locally-sourced fruits and vegetables, dairy, protein and pantry staples. Finally, we support investing **\$10 million to fund critical food purchases** to help with supply chain disruptions.

Thank you for your consideration in providing critical support to Oregonians in desperate need of assistance.

Community Action leads the way to eliminate conditions of poverty and creates opportunities for people and communities to thrive.