



April 10, 2023

Senator Steiner, Co-Chair  
Representative Sanchez, Co-Chair  
Joint Committee on Ways and Means  
900 Court Street, NE  
Salem, OR 97301

Co-Chair Steiner, Co-Chair Sanchez, and Members of the Ways and Means Committee,

HSCO was formed nearly 40 years ago with two prime objectives: to refrain from pitting one human service program or population group against another; and to increase resources for human services, health, housing, and related programs.

We want to begin with expressing our gratitude for the bipartisan efforts to meet the housing and homeless emergency. Passing HB 5019 and HB 2001 with urgency was unprecedented and these actions will bring critical resources to Oregon communities to establish local housing solutions for vulnerable populations.

However, vulnerable populations struggled during the height of the pandemic and now we are in a situation where federal and state one-time benefits are ending. Prior to the pandemic, basic services were chronically underfunded. And now, with the loss of federal resources, we are heading backwards, leaving people at risk, especially in communities of color.

We respectfully ask you to consider the following:

- The 2.5% across the board cut will affect hiring in key positions. This will create stress on workers and clients and delays in services;
- Provider rates must be budgeted at adequate levels to ensure that we can support workers and expand the workforce to meet pressing needs;
- Maintaining continuing level caseloads, as projected, and establishing adequate caseload reserves in the Emergency Board fund;
- Making key investments, including the HSCO endorsed budget priorities.

HSCO understands that meeting the needs of Oregonians requires additional funding. Our revenue principles are clear and focused:

- Progressive: Oregonians with more wealth should contribute a larger share.
- Adequate: Sufficient for the health, education, and wellbeing of Oregonians.
- Equitable: foster more equitable outcomes based on race, ethnicity, gender, and ability.
- Fair: The Oregon Kicker, due to return over \$3.5 billion to taxpayers this year, is unethical. When programs intended to help people succeed are underfunded, including

housing and recovery services, we all lose. Reforms are long overdue to make sure Oregon is strong and resilient far into the future.

Thank you for your consideration. We look forward to engaging in additional discussion as the 82<sup>nd</sup> Legislative Assembly works toward a budget that works for Oregon, particularly for those most in need.

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