

Submitter: Kristy Rodriguez  
On Behalf Of: Housing Authority of Malheur and Harney County  
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means  
Measure: SB5506

Honorable Co Chairs, Steiner and Sanchez, and members of the Committee:

My name is Kristy Rodriguez, and I am the Executive Director for the Housing Authority of Malheur & Harney Counties, but also a long-time resident of Malheur County.

I am here today to ask for your support for two bills HB 3555-4 and HB 3482-2.

HB 3555-4 increases farmworker's ability to care for themselves and their families by making targeted investments towards the development and Pre-development of community-based housing for farmworkers across our state, including our rural community.

Due to Oregon's critical housing shortage and cost of living crisis, along with cultural and linguistic barriers, many farmworkers and their families face housing instability or inadequate housing conditions, leading to poor and overcrowded living conditions. Farmworkers-who are often immigrants, Indigenous and/or Latinx, and low-income-need safe, affordable places to call home.

With this bill it will support 10-million-dollar investments towards development and pre-development of community-based housing for farmworkers through a grant program administered by OHCS. This bill also encourages development of housing near specific characteristics or amenities that support or attract agricultural workers and their families.

This bill will also offer prioritization of funding to nonprofit housing corporations that serve agricultural workers, or partnerships with Housing nonprofits that serve agricultural workers such as our agency which is needed for our local jurisdiction. HB 3482-2, funds grants and loans to housing authorities, nonprofits, tribes, local governments, and other entities to cover predevelopment costs for the development of affordable housing.

Often in our rural area, housing authorities are looked at to be a developer of affordable housing, but with small staff, which limits our capacity for this big task. In order to develop adequate housing, the right investments at the right time can really be effective to our community with assistance from HB 3482-2. We can gain more capacity for development consultants, surveys, environmental reviews, prior engagement of services from public safety and health providers for the complete wrap around services needed for our community, and the list goes on. HB 3482-2 provides for these critical funds at any given critical moment.

I strongly ask you to please support both of these bills as this is very much needed support for our community to continue to thrive.

Thank you for your time and consideration of these matters.