

Submitter: Ylva Hernlund  
On Behalf Of: Rent Assistance Funding  
Committee: Senate Committee On Housing and Development  
Measure: SB1530

February 10th, 2024

## Support for Rent Assistance Investments to Prevent Homelessness

Dear Chair Jama, Vice-Chair Anderson, and members of the Senate Housing and Development Committee:

It's time to ensure adequate investment in rental assistance and eviction prevention, to prevent homelessness in our state. Oregon is among the states with the most severely cost-burdened renters in the nation. As a result, Oregon has one of the highest per capita rates of homelessness in the nation.

With a sharp spike in high-rent homelessness, it's urgent that you invest in proven prevention strategies that keep Oregonians housed. At current levels of need, the funds previously allocated will be gone by July 2024. The legislature must fully fund the Stable Homes for Oregon package included in Fair Shot's People's Budget which has had a proven track record of keeping working Oregonians safe and stable.

Altogether, this package calls for:

- \$45 million in rent assistance through community action agencies and community-based organizations.
- \$6.5 million to the Urban League of Oregon for culturally-specific housing stability services.
- \$6 million to the Home Fund at Oregon Worker Relief for housing stability services for immigrant Oregonians.
- \$2 million for outreach services for residents of expiring affordable-housing units.

86% of eviction filings are for nonpayment, against people who have fallen behind on their rent. There are close to 2000 eviction filings a month. The availability of rent assistance for tenants in the critical time of need will help ensure that landlords get paid, evictions are avoided, and most importantly, Oregonians stay housed.

I myself have experienced this stress. As low-income workers, my late husband and I were fortunate to find, when we moved back to Eugene in 2017, a market-rate two-bedroom apartment that we could afford. A year later he suddenly died, starting me on a years' long struggle to avoid becoming homeless. My unsympathetic landlord

has stringent requirements for approving applications (5 years of professional rental history! What student has that?) even for room mates, adding stress to the process. The COVID rent assistance was the only time I was able to relax, knowing that I could afford rent without having to have a stranger move in during a health emergency. Now I have finally found a stable room mate who is a friend, but I still pay 50% of my (now) SSDI income in rent.

Hardworking Oregonians are struggling to make ends meet, facing eviction and homelessness as a result. In my own apartment complex, I routinely see working families be evicted for inability to keep up with the ever-rising rent. It is ten times less expensive to prevent homelessness than it is to respond to it. The People's Budget investments will keep people housed, while we work towards long-term solutions to end our housing and affordability crisis.

Thank you for your work on behalf of Oregonians.

Sincerely,

Ylva Hernlund