
February 13, 2024

To: Senate Committee on Housing and Development
From: **Isa Peña, Innovation Law Lab**
Re: Support for SB: 1530

Support for Rent Assistance Investments to Prevent Homelessness

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

My name is Isa Peña and I am the Director of Strategy at Innovation Law Lab. Innovation Law Lab is an Oregon-based non-profit that leverages the power of the legal system, technology, and advocacy to support our state's immigrant and refugee population. Through our work with the Oregon Worker Relief coalition, we have been able to design and implement programs in support of immigrants and refugees who are facing housing instability and eviction amidst this housing crisis. In working with our coalition and partners, we have seen first hand the immense need for housing and rental assistance in our immigrant communities. Oregon is among the states with the most cost-burdened renters in the nation.¹ As a result, Oregon has one of the highest 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.

¹ [OR housing: Oregon among states with the most cost-burdened renters: Harvard \(koin.com\)](https://www.koin.com)

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.

The Oregon Worker Relief Home Fund has been a lifeline for many immigrant Oregonians in need and we know hardworking Oregonians are struggling to make ends meet, facing eviction and homelessness. 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.

On behalf of Innovation Law Lab, I urge you to support SB 1530.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dora L. Pena". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.