



February 13, 2024

To: Senate Committee on Housing and Development

From: Emerson Hamlin, Political Organizer, Oregon Nurses Association

Re: Support for SB 1530

Chair Jama, Vice-Chair Anderson, and members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on behalf of the Oregon Nurses Association (ONA). ONA is a professional association and labor union representing over 17,000 nurses and healthcare professionals. Our members work in urban and rural hospitals, clinics, school-based health centers, home health, and county health departments across Oregon.

Oregonians are struggling under the weight of housing costs. Our state is seeing nearly 2,000 eviction filings a month; 86% of which are due to households falling behind on their rent. Worse still, all previous funding allocated by the state will be used by July 2024, leaving many Oregonians without any aid.

ONA members care about housing, because homelessness leads to worse health. Our members see this consistently: many of the individuals going to the emergency room for ongoing health care concerns are living outside, where they struggle to heal. Their experiences are validated by the National Health Care for the Homeless Council, who has long found that living outside creates new health problems and exacerbates existing ones. Between high levels of stress, little ability to access nutritious food, no safe place to store medications, and inconsistent access to clean, running water, it is easy for minor issues like cuts or colds to escalate into major health problems.¹ Similarly, people without housing experience higher rates of hypertension, asthma, diabetes, and HIV/AIDS than their housed peers.² In total, people experiencing homelessness have higher rates of illness and die an average of twelve years sooner than members of the average US population.³ If we want healthy communities, we must do all we can to keep people housed.

SB 1530 is part of the solution. It provides necessary funding for rental assistance and outreach. Providing these funds will keep Oregonians housed and healthy. ONA urges a yes vote. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Emerson Hamlin

¹ National Health Care for the Homeless Council, 2019. *Homelessness & Health: What's the Connection?* [Fact Sheet].

² Zlotnick C, Zerger S, Wolfe P. Health Care for the Homeless: What We Have Learned in the Past 30 Years and What's Next. *American Journal of Public Health*. 103, S199_S205, <https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2013.301586>

³ National Health Care for the Homeless Council, 2019. *Homelessness & Health: What's the Connection?* [Fact Sheet].