



HOUSING SENIORS | CREATING HOPE | PILOTING CHANGE

February 12, 2024

Members of the Senate Committee on Housing and Development
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Support for SB 1530

Chair Jama, Vice-Chair Anderson, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to share testimony on behalf of Northwest Pilot Project in strong support of SB 1530. This bill will serve as a critical homelessness prevention strategy to protect seniors, families, individuals, and communities across the state from displacement.

Northwest Pilot Project (NWPP) is a social service agency with over five decades of experience in providing housing stabilization services to low and very low-income older adults, age 55 and over, experiencing or at risk of homelessness in Multnomah County.

According to the U.S. Government Accountability Office, every \$100 increase in community median rent equals a 9% increase in local homelessness.¹ In Oregon, high-rent displacement is reaching a crisis level: more than 86% of court evictions are for non-payment of rent.² At a time when Oregon is experiencing some of the highest rates of homelessness in the nation – and seniors age 65 and older are the fastest growing age group of people experiencing homelessness³ – we must invest in proven prevention strategies that keep Oregonians housed. Preventing eviction is the most upstream solution we have to homelessness.

While the legislature made important investments in the 2023 session to address the housing crisis, the rent assistance funds allocated are insufficient to keep pace with the current level of need, with

¹ “How COVID-19 Could Aggravate the Homelessness Crisis?,” U.S. Government Accountability Office, August 2020. <https://www.gao.gov/blog/how-covid-19-could-aggravate-homelessness-crisis>

² “Oregon Eviction Filings Data,” Oregon Law Center and Legal Aid Services of Oregon, January 2023. <https://olis.oregonlegislature.gov/liz/2023R1/Downloads/PublicTestimonyDocument/50686>

³ The Emerging Crisis of Aged Homelessness (2019), Dennis Culhane, PhD et al. <https://aisp.upenn.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Emerging-Crisis-of-Aged-Homelessness.pdf>

funds expected to run out by July 2024. The legislature must **fully fund** the Stable Homes for Oregon package, which 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; and
- \$2 million for outreach services for residents of expiring affordable housing units.

Investing in homelessness prevention is ten times less expensive than responding to homelessness. The Stable Homes for Oregon package is an action that the legislature can take now to have an immediate impact on our state's housing crisis while we work on the longer-term solution of increasing the supply of affordable housing. We strongly encourage your support of SB 1530. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Laura Golino de Lovato
Executive Director
Northwest Pilot Project