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March 19, 2025

To: Housing Committee on Housing and Homelessness

Re: Testimony in support of HB 2964

Dear Chair Marsh, Co-Vice Chair Anderson, Co-Vice Chair Breese-Iverson, and Members of the Committee,

Northwest Housing Alternatives (NHA) is a 40-year-old nonprofit, mission-oriented, community-based housing organization. On behalf of the families, seniors, Veterans, and people living with disabilities who make their homes within NHA's affordable housing portfolio, NHA supports HB 2964 to codify and broaden eligibility in the OHCS Predevelopment Program to make grants to land-rich but cash-poor organizations looking to develop new affordable housing.

In recent years NHA has built strong and successful partnerships with faith organizations to plan for or develop new homes in Florence, Portland, and Sisters. NHA is grateful to work with mission-aligned and patient partners who maintain their commitment to building affordable housing despite the escalating time and costs needed to complete projects. Faith partners also typically provide additional community services, such as food pantries or day shelters. Many more faith communities have discussed the importance of using their excess land for community benefit, especially affordable housing: **there are an estimated 60 acres of faith land ready to be unlocked across Oregon.**

The congregations owning this land lack the resources needed to complete upfront feasibility and community engagement work that readies their land for development. A predevelopment grant option would allow these faith communities to access predevelopment funding without repayment. This bill will provide a needed option to cover a range of costs from land surveys to community engagement efforts – which are particularly important for congregations in building support and pre-empting opposition. As an experienced developer, we have seen numerous projects stall or fail because of the high cost and time associated with these predevelopment efforts.

We encourage you to help us unlock more faith-owned land so that we can help more Oregonians have safe, affordable housing.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lydia Slocum".

Lydia Slocum, Senior Housing Developer