



March 27, 2025

Co-Chairs Woods and Gomberg, Members of the Committee:

My name is Steve Messinetti and I am the CEO of Habitat for Humanity Portland Region. I am here today to support the budget request from Oregon Housing + Community Services for LIFT for Homeownership.

Habitat Portland Region has dramatically scaled up our affordable homeownership production over the past five years thanks to consistent funding through LIFT. We have received eleven LIFT awards for 233 homes across the Portland Metro Region.

We are about to complete and start selling 35 energy-efficient, family-sized, permanently affordable homes in two LIFT funded projects in Hillsboro and King City. The average AMI of the buyers is 52%, with a family size of more than 4 people per household. That's 160 people who now have permanent stable housing thanks to LIFT for Homeownership.

And we are raising walls now on 60 more LIFT funded homes in Portland, Lake Oswego and Gresham.

Especially for households with lower incomes, homeownership is transformative – it's the difference between struggling to pay rent, impermissible choices between competing basic needs and frequent moves, *and the stability of a fixed 30-year affordable mortgage*. That's why Habitat Portland Region strives to sell two-thirds of our homes to families with incomes below 60% of the area median. As we have faced rising construction costs and interest rates, LIFT is what has allowed our program to continue to deliver these critical homeownership opportunities.

In the past, lawmakers may have worried that the network of affordable homeownership developers lacked the capacity to utilize \$100M or more in LIFT funds. Today, we have the opposite problem. The current round of LIFT funding for the latter half of the biennium includes \$40M, which is only enough to fund half of the projects that expressed an intent to apply.

At Habitat Portland Region, we expect to have three projects in the queue for 2026. We have land secured for 87 homes, with an additional parcel for 40 homes under contract.

Without additional funding, however, we will have to hit pause on shovel-ready and sorely needed developments.

I urge you to approve LIFT for Homeownership at the maximum possible level.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Steve Messinetti". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Steve Messinetti
President & CEO