

Support for POPs 501 (Shelter); 502 (Re-Housing); 504 and 505 (Homelessness Prevention Resources) in the OHCS Budget

Co-Chairs Lieber and Sanchez, and Co-Vice-Chairs Girod, Gomberg, and Smith, and Members of the Committee:

I am writing in strong support of Policy Option Packages 501, 502, 504, and 505, the Homelessness Shelter, Re-Housing, and Prevention Packages in the Oregon Housing and Community Services Agency Budget. These POPs will ensure continuity of emergency rent assistance and community-based and culturally specific services designed to prioritize the prevention of eviction and homelessness in communities across the state, as well as continuity of shelter and re-housing services and supports.

Cuts to any of these programs will lead to more unsheltered homelessness in our communities and more trauma for Oregonians who are struggling. Continuing these programs will save lives and support communities.

Having personally experienced the devastating reality of homelessness several years ago, I understand the profound impact it can have on an individual. As a woman of color involved in education and community outreach, I found myself in a situation of housing insecurity due to unforeseen circumstances including significant rent increases and medical emergencies.

Fortunately, determination, grit, and community-based programs similar to those supported by these policy option packages provided the vital resources and stability I needed to overcome homelessness. I am now honored to work with the Community Alliance of Tenants (CAT), advocating for tenant rights and supporting others facing similar challenges every day.

With one of the highest rates of unsheltered homelessness in the nation and the highest rate of youth homelessness, Oregon must prioritize funding to strengthen our network of shelter, rehousing assistance, and responsive and supportive services to help our neighbors who have been forced by our housing crisis to live outside. We must ensure that prevention resources, including emergency rent assistance, legal assistance, and supportive services, are adequate to prevent more people from falling into homelessness in the first place.

Please support:

- **Policy Option Package 501:** Maintain shelter and supportive services operations. These services provide stability and shelter, especially during extreme weather conditions, connecting vulnerable populations to resources vital for transitioning to stable housing.
\$217 Million

- **Policy Option Package 502:** Support re-housing initiatives providing up to two years of rental assistance and necessary support to help individuals secure housing and rebuild stability after homelessness. **\$188 Million**
- **Policy Option Packages 504/505:** Replenish funding for proven eviction prevention programs provided by local community organizations, community action agencies, and culturally specific providers. **\$173.2 Million**
- **Emergency rent assistance:** \$109 Million minimum required to prevent evictions over the next two years, distributed by trusted community organizations statewide.
- **Homelessness prevention services:** \$63.2 Million dedicated to housing navigation services, landlord-tenant education, legal support, tenant advocacy, eviction prevention, and rapid rehousing.

We can't afford to wait. Our lawmakers must act now to protect our communities, support our providers, and ensure every Oregonian has a stable foundation to build their future.

Thank you for your consideration and your service to Oregon communities. I urge your strong support of these Policy Option Packages.

Sincerely,

Alagia Felix
Community Alliance of Tenants