



April 15, 2025

Re: Support for Homelessness Prevention Resources in the OHCS Budget (HB 5011 and POPs 504 and 505)

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

I am Kim McCarty. I am the Executive Director of the Community Alliance of Tenant (CAT). CAT is a statewide tenant education and advocacy organization. I am writing in strong support of Homelessness Prevention resources in the OHCS budget (HB 5011 and POP's 504 and 505. This is part of the Homelessness Shelter, Re-Housing, and Prevention Packages in the Oregon Housing and Community Services Agency Budget. These POPs will ensure the 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.

CAT is specifically advocating for the \$173.2 million Policy Option Packages 504/505: Please replenish funding for proven eviction prevention programs provided by local community organizations that understand local needs, including community action agencies and culturally specific service providers.

1. **\$109 million of Emergency rent assistance to prevent homelessness:** is the minimum amount of rent assistance necessary to prevent evictions over the next two years. These funds are distributed by community action agencies and community-based and trusted organizations across the state.
2. **\$63.2 million of Homelessness prevention services funding is needed** to support housing navigation services, landlord-tenant education and outreach, legal services, tenant supports, eviction prevention, tenant advocacy, and rapid rehousing services

Given the unprecedented number of evictions in Oregon this year. It is more important than ever that we maintain a basic safety net. Emergency rent assistance is proven to stabilize households and prevent homelessness. Organizations such as CAT and other tenant support organizations successfully use emergency rent assistance coupled with tenant education, legal services, and referrals to improve stability.

At CAT we hear from thousands of tenants each year on our Renters Rights' Hotline. We offer knowledge of landlord tenant law through the hotline and workshops.

Through our Tenant Protection Team we assist hundreds of tenants per year with one or more services including legal assistance, referrals, rent assistance or service navigation.



A significant number of the tenants that call us are seeking help to pay rent. Their reasons include an unexpected illness, job loss, car repair and other unexpected expenses. Helping a household pay their largest expense, rent, at a time of emergency prevents the impacts of eviction. This year has been especially distressing because emergency rent assistance at most organizations has been exhausted. Too often, a tenant that we referred to an agency for rent assistance calls us back because funds had run out that month. Rent assistance agencies report that tenants do not return for help which underscores how cost effective and impactful this strategy is.

Oregon renters are the 5th [most cost burdened](#) in the nation, and our eviction crisis is growing with more than 27,000 cases filed last year. This is the highest rate and increase does not appear to be slowing. Approximately 88% of evictions are because tenants cannot afford Oregon's high rents. As housing costs rise, more families are being pushed into crisis. Oregon families are on the brink, and we must act now with real solutions to prevent homelessness.

With one of the highest rates of unsheltered homelessness in the nation, and the highest rate of youth homelessness, we must also prioritize funding to strengthen our network of shelter, rehousing assistance, and responsive and supportive services to help our neighbors forced to live outside because they have no place else to go.

The impacts of our state's housing crisis fall hardest on specific populations:

- Families with children facing impossible choices between rent and other basic needs;
- Black and Latine renters who encounter discriminatory barriers to securing and keeping housing;
- Elderly Oregonians, who are the fastest-growing group losing their homes.

Sustain the baseline emergency rent assistance funding and support the essential organizations. We urge your strong support of HB5011 of these Policy Option Packages. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony and for your service to Oregon communities.

Sincerely,



Kim McCarty

Executive Director
Community Alliance of Tenants
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