

Submitter: Mandee Campos
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB5006
Co-Chairs Lieber and Sanchez, Co-Vice-Chairs Girod, Gomberg, and Smith, and Members of the Committee:

I am writing in strong support of Policy Option Packages 504 and 505, the Homelessness Prevention Package in the Oregon Housing and Community Services Agency Budget. These POPs will allocate \$173.2 million to ensure continuity of emergency rent assistance and community-based and culturally specific services designed to prioritize prevention of eviction and homelessness in communities across the state.

I currently work as a renters rights educator, and prior to that, I worked in providing housing and rental assistance services to young families for 4 years. The majority of participants in my previous work program are birthing parents, and about 60% of them are fleeing domestic violence, which is a notable financial burden on top of safety– this is in addition to experiencing homelessness or housing instability.

Participants who are able to obtain childcare, and then employment, are often working retail, warehouse, or what we most commonly see: caregiving positions. Professions like caregiving are emotionally and physically exhausting, yet pay so little and do not cover the needs of the family, much less their rent. The properties I've encountered in my line of work are owned by large property management corporations which often means no onsite management, no onsite maintenance, and endless automated voicemail directories that make it unreasonably difficult to get in touch with landlords. They are slow to have compassion, and quick to give notices to their tenants. Cost of living goes up, wages stay stagnant, and the conditions of the properties do not improve with each rent increase. The most marginalized households in our communities are set up to fail in this current system. While the homeless crisis we face is urgent a real, what is often overlooked is the crisis of those on the brink of homelessness– the unstably housed. Living pay check to paycheck, without the opportunity to grow, keeps households in perpetual poverty, and a eviction record can be the final nail in the coffin for their opportunity to lift themselves out of poverty. 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. Approximately 88% of evictions are because tenants cannot afford Oregon's high rents.

There are evidence-based prevention solutions already in place to keep thousands of families, seniors, and hard-working Oregonians out of homelessness. Connecting

people to eviction protection and homelessness prevention services such as navigation services and legal assistance is a proven approach to ensure people can stay housed. Preventing eviction is 5–10 times cheaper than letting someone fall into homelessness and trying to rehouse them later. Beyond cost, prevention also avoids trauma, job loss, school disruption, and health risks that come with homelessness. We urge you to prioritize the critical and proven safety net continued by POPS 504 and 505. Please invest \$173.2 million to continue homelessness prevention and eviction intervention services and legal assistance.

As the child of a single teen parent, I relate deeply to the families I have worked with, and I have the lived experience of housing instability and know the impact it can have on the children throughout their life journey. I am writing to ask our lawmakers to act now to protect our communities, support our providers, and ensure every Oregonian has a stable framework to build their future.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony and for your service to Oregon communities.

Sincerely,

Mandee Campos