



COMMUNITY ACTION

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**HELPING PEOPLE
EXIT POVERTY**

March 26, 2019

Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Transportation and Economic Development
Attention: Co-Chair Manning, Co-Chair Gomberg, and Members of the Committee.

Dear Co-Chairs and Member of the Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee:

I am writing this letter in support of the passage of SB 5512. I am the Executive Director of the Mid-Willamette Valley Community Action Agency (MWVCAA). Our agency works to empower people to change their lives and exit poverty by providing vital services and community leadership. Community Action works primarily in Marion and Polk Counties with partner agencies, local leaders, government officials, and other organizations to identify community needs, gather resources, and direct those resources where they will have the greatest impact. Our programs and services include early childhood programs for low-income families, housing and homelessness support, energy assistance, weatherization, food resources, nutrition education, homeless and runaway youth services, and community re-entry support from our criminal justice system.

MWVCAA strongly supports increasing base funding for EHA/SHAP to \$50 million. This would provide vital funds needed to build the infrastructure our communities need to address the increasing rate of housing insecurity we are seeing in this region. There is a great increase in homelessness in Marion and Polk Counties, specifically among families with children and adults over the age of 60. It is no secret the risks homelessness poses for these populations. Children face poor life outcomes, including developmental challenges, poor physical health, and shortened lifespans when faced with homelessness and the trauma it brings. Adults over 60 face increased medical issues and fixed incomes. A lack of stable housing makes effectively treating chronic conditions close to impossible and without an increasing income, finding stable housing can be near impossible as well, creating a potentially fatal cycle for our low-income seniors.

MWVCAA ardently supports the increase of EHA/SHAP funds as we believe stable housing to be the most critical factor in achieving wellness for our vulnerable community members. From July 2017 until March 2019 MWVCAA has been able to house 558 households, serving over 10,500 individuals. Within these numbers we have been able to provide housing services to 915 domestic violence victims, 1,085 Veterans who were at risk or experiencing homelessness, and 3,151 vulnerable children. With increased funds we can provide more emergency shelters and increase our supportive and affordable housing stock. Oregon must make this gesture to show our vulnerable neighbors that their State cares for them and deeply values their wellbeing.

Yours respectfully,

Jimmy Jones, Ph.D.
Executive Director