

Northeast Oregon Housing Authority

Serving Union-Grant-Baker & Wallowa County

Mailing Address

P.O. Box 3357

La Grande, OR 97850

Office Location

2608 May Lane



PHONE: 541-963-5360

800-425-8638

WEBSITE: www.neoha.org

FAX: 541-963-3682

TDD: 541-963-2465

EMAIL: neoha@uwtc.net

Northeast Oregon Housing Authority does not discriminate on the basis of disability status in the admission or access to, or treatment or employment in its federally assisted programs and activities. NEOHA Executive Director has been designated to coordinate compliance with the nondiscrimination requirements contained in the HUD regulations implementing Section 504 (24CFR,pt8)11/2013

April 11, 2019

Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Capital Construction
Attention: Co-Chair Girod, Co-Chair Holvey, and Members of the Committee.

Dear Co-Chair Girod, Co-Chair Holvey and Members of the Committee:

Northeast Oregon Housing Authority is writing to support HB 5005, and the Housing Alliance request for \$200 million in General Obligation, Article XI-Q bonds to build affordable homes across Oregon.

Northeast Oregon Housing Authority is dedicated to enhancing the quality of life in Baker, Grant, Union, and Wallowa Counties by providing and effectively managing low cost housing which is diverse, well maintained, and aesthetically pleasing for those whom circumstances prevent them from competing in the general marketplace.

Northeast Oregon Housing Authority seeks to achieve the highest and best use of housing for people of low and moderate income through the promotion of economic development, homeownership, and self-sufficiency opportunities.

The Counties we serve are rural and provide service industry and blue collar jobs with wages typically being under \$15.00 per hour. In order to afford rent for a 2 bedroom apartment, this requires an individual to work 51-54 hours per week at minimum wage.

Oregonians on fixed incomes in our counties face multiple barriers that make it difficult to afford rent on a one bedroom apartment at fair market rent.

All four of the counties we serve have serious shortages of affordable housing.

Baker County Statistics:

For every 100 families with extremely low incomes, there are only 29 affordable units available.

1 out of 4 renters paying more than 50% of their income in rent.

3 out of 4 renters with extremely low incomes paying more than 50% of their income in rent.

1 in 20 students have experienced homelessness in 2017-2018, which equates to 175 children during the school year that have experienced homelessness.

A household must earn \$28,160.00 per year to afford a 2 bedroom apartment at fair market rent.

Minimum wage income is \$21,840.00 per year.

Homeownership is out of reach for many with a median home value being \$210,000.00

Baker County needs 390 new units to meet the current housing needs.

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Grant County Statistics:

For every 100 families with extremely low income there are only 26 affordable units available
1 out of 4 renters paying more than 50% of their income in rent.
3 out of 4 renters with extremely low income paying more than 50% of their income in rent.
1 in 100 students experienced homelessness in 2017-2018, which equates to 6 students during the school year that have experienced homelessness.
A household must earn \$27,880.00 per year to afford a 2 bedroom unit at fair market rent.
Minimum wage income is \$21,840.00 per year.
Homeownership is out of reach for many with median home value being \$158,800.00.
Grant County needs 140 new units to meet the current housing needs.

Union County Statistics:

For every 100 families with extremely low income there are only 52 affordable units available.
1 out of 3 renters are paying more than 50% of their income in rent
More than 3 out of 4 renters with extremely low income are paying more than 50% of their income in rent.
1 in 25 students experienced homelessness in 2017-2018, which equates to 168 children during the school year that has experienced homelessness.
A household must earn \$29,440.00 per year to afford a 2 bedroom unit at fair market rent.
Minimum was income is \$21,840.00 per year
Homeownership is out of reach for many with median home value being \$190,600.00.
Union County needs 631 new units to meet the current housing needs.

Wallowa County Statistics:

For every 100 families with extremely low income, there are only 22 affordable units available
1 out of 4 renters paying more than 50% of their income in rent.
3 out of 5 renters with extremely low income paying more than 50% of their income in rent.
1 in 30 students experienced homelessness in 2017-2018, which equates to 26 children during the school year that has experienced homelessness.
A household must earn \$27, 880.00 per year to afford a 2 bedroom apartment at fair market rent.
Minimum wage income is \$21,840.00 per year.
Homeownership is out of reach for many with median home value being \$211,200.00
Wallowa County needs 105 new units to meet the current housing needs.

Northeast Oregon Housing Authority has the full support of our Mayor, City Council Members, City Planner, and multiple Community Partners to seek and secure funding for affordable housing to build new units to help ease the housing shortages that we are facing.

Northeast Oregon Housing Authority has plans to apply for the LIFT grant in 2020 and we are working on securing a parcel of ground through the Land Acquisition Program. The lot is 5 acres and zoned R-3 Dense Residential. It is the only available R-3 zoned property in La Grande. Our agency is looking to build a 52 unit apartment complex through the LIFT grant and have the ability and room to put permanent supportive housing relative to the needs of our community on this lot. Our agency is also looking for lots to build scattered site housing for Homeownership, and a site for a Homeless/transitional shelter. We currently have a plan in place and could be in the building process if funding was available now.

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The benefits of stabilizing a family or elderly/disabled individuals has been proven over and over by reducing stress on these individuals, allowing them to work within and actually have a budget, seek medical/mental health treatment, afford medication, and food. Stabilization also leads to increased school attendance, a reduction in behavioral issues and they have the ability to connect with Community Partners that provide wellness programs, after school programs, adult education, budgeting and many more programs all which allow them to get on the path to being self-sufficient and a productive member of the community.

Affordable housing in Eastern Oregon is a vital key to the well-being of our communities. The area we serve is a working poor and Elderly/Disabled population. Without affordable housing, much of this population would be on the street and homeless.

Our agency has yet to meet anyone that has chosen to be homeless and when you encounter someone that has lost all hope or does not have any idea on how they are going to get through the next day or where they are going to stay for the night, it is devastating to be the one to tell them that we don't have a solution but can put them on a waiting list. It is however absolutely life changing when we can tell them we have the ability to help and can also connect them with our Community Partners for additional services. This is when you see the glimmer of hope and possibility along with tears, a handshake or a hug. It is a humanity issue and a firm reminder of why we do the jobs we do.

Since 2015, the Legislature has committed \$120 million in general obligation bonds to the LIFT program, which has funded over 2,000 affordable homes across Oregon.

Northeast Oregon Housing Authority is asking the Committee to support the Housing Alliance request for \$200 million to develop new affordable homes across Oregon (80% to affordable rental homes, 20% to affordable homes for sale).

Northeast Oregon Housing Authority has the will power and drive, along with a dedicated group of Community Partners to create these housing opportunities to individuals, families and communities and would be able to increase the positive impact stable, affordable housing has if more funding resources were available.

I would like to thank the Committee for their attention to this issue and greatly appreciate your service.

Sincerely
Sarah Parker
Deputy Director