

**Community Housing Fund
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Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Capital Construction

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

**RE: Support for HB 5030
Housing Alliance Request for \$100 million in lottery bonds to maintain affordable homes**

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

My name is Sheila Greenlaw-Fink, and I serve as the Executive Director of the Community Housing Fund (CHF), in Beaverton. We are a nonprofit lender serving Washington County. Our work focuses on providing the early capital needed to get affordable housing projects off the ground—primarily through predevelopment and land acquisition loans.

At CHF, we believe everyone deserves a safe, affordable place to call home. We know that in our County, for every 100 families with extremely low incomes, there are only 20 affordable units available. We need nearly 13,000 more homes to meet the needs of these existing residents! One in four renters in our county are paying more than 50% of their income for rent, which puts them at risk in meeting a variety of other basic needs (food, medicine, utilities, transportation).

The good news is, there is a strong network of housing developers and operators in our County working hard with Oregon Housing and Community Services and other funding partners to create new, and to preserve existing, homes for those of modest means—working families, seniors, and those with disabilities.

At CHF we work with many of these sponsors, providing predevelopment loans to cover early due diligence and to structure funding requests. For example: last year Bienestar, the only Latino-serving housing developer in our county, was able to secure funding from OHCS to preserve the Montebello Apartments. Bienestar provides over 500 homes in twelve multifamily properties in five communities.

Montebello includes mostly large, family size apartments—a scarce commodity in the private market. Its original funding included Agricultural Workforce Housing Tax Credits, and for the past 20 years it has been a safe haven for those who cultivate and harvest our food. Their paychecks simply don't stretch far enough to access simple, safe, affordable housing in the private market.

Bienestar not only helps these hard-working families find a place to call home, but also provides a variety of programs to ensure that families thrive. They have a large array of youth programs that impact academic achievement, workforce readiness and financial literacy. Their Promotores program

recruits community leaders, who engage and connect their neighbors to relevant services, often bridging language and cultural divides that can otherwise isolate low-income Latinos. Over the years, I've personally enjoyed following the success stories of dozens of leaders, women such as Christina who followed up her GED with 2 and 4-year college degrees and is working toward her dream of becoming a pharmacist.

Bienestar's work to build Montebello in a vibrant town center area is not unique. Sponsors of affordable housing work hard to find locations that are near the amenities and resources low-income families and individuals need to thrive, including access to transit, schools, groceries and health care. Montebello is near the Hillsboro light rail line. Today, it would be impossible to secure buildable land in these high opportunity locations.

Bienestar's Montebello is just one of the communities that OHCS has made possible throughout the state of Oregon. We know that developers across the state can and must do more of this critical work to maintain these homes in our communities for the decades to come. But this work requires significant resources.

The Housing Alliance is asking for \$100 million in bonds to support this critical work. We know that we absolutely have the capacity and need to utilize every dollar.

Washington County is the second largest, most ethnically diverse county in the state, with a cost of living that is among the highest. We know that every community in our state is being impacted by similar housing issues, and that our neighbors are struggling to make ends meet. People are being forced to make impossible choices—between paying the rent, eating, covering utilities, or medications. We need to work together to make sure everyone has a safe, stable, and affordable place to call home.

At CHF, we look forward to working with you, the governor, and OHCS, to not only provide funding for new units, but to preserve the ones we've got. These existing properties represent a place to call home for thousands today, and are a resource that, if protected, will continue to serve future generations.

Thank you for your attention to these issues, and your service on this Committee!

Sincerely,

Sheila Greenlaw-Fink

Executive Director

Testimony has been emailed to: jwmcc.exhibits@oregonlegislature.gov.