

January 31, 2020

To: Senate Committee on Housing and Development  
RE: Support for SB 1532 Healthy Homes

Dear Chair Fagan, Vice-Chair Heard and Members of the Committee:

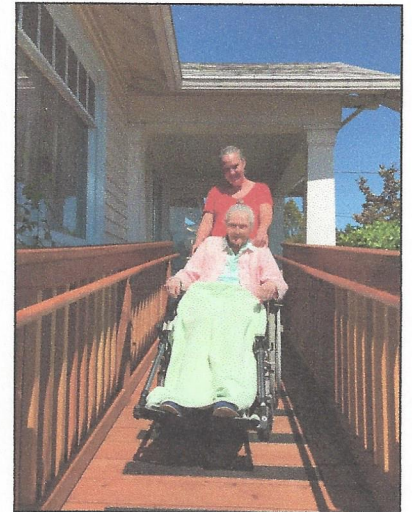
On behalf of Willamette West Habitat for Humanity, I am writing to express our strong support for SB 1532, the Healthy Homes pilot program.

We have seen first-hand the results of offering a hand up, NOT a hand out, to low-income homeowners in Washington County. We've seen a military veteran so despondent over the conditions of his house that he sunk deeper and deeper in depression, to the point where his wife couldn't even bear to decorate their home for the holidays – “why bother” – turn to joy at putting up a Christmas tree and holiday decorations last year. Repairs to their home cost over \$24,000! They were proud to pay \$5,400 of the bill themselves using our zero-interest loan, and appreciative that the balance of funding came from the State of Oregon and other donors.

Or consider an elderly homeowner in Hillsboro, earning 18% of the area median income. She is confined to a wheelchair. Her home has steep stairs at the front and back door that cannot be navigated by someone in a wheelchair; the only way out for her is to be carried. Consequently, she only leaves the house 2-3 times each year, for doctor appointments. The slope and tightness of her property prevented a wheelchair ramp everyone initially thought, but we figured out how to do it, designing the ramp to wrap around her house. It cost Willamette West Habitat \$2,400, the homeowner paid \$300. Since the completion of the ramp, she and her caretakers get out every day now. The improvement in her quality of life... words cannot fully express.



In the past four years we've helped 55 homeowners with critical repairs to their homes that were unaffordable to them. We already have eleven projects identified or underway for 2020 and it's only January. We have barely scratched the surface of homeowners needing our help so they can stay in their homes, and their homes stay part of the affordable housing stock in Washington County.



We at Willamette West Habitat for Humanity thank you for your dedicated service and thoughtful consideration of SB 1532. Establish the Healthy Homes Pilot Initiative and we can help many more families, living in similar circumstances, who really need our help.

Respectfully submitted,



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Director of Resources

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