



February 13, 2020

Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Capital Construction

Re: HB5201 (2020)

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

I am writing to you on behalf of Home Forward, the largest affordable housing provider in Oregon, in strong support of the Speaker's request for \$50 million dollars in Article XI-Q bonds for affordable housing development and \$20 million in Lottery bonds to preserve existing affordable housing.

The mission of Home Forward is to assure that the people of the community are sheltered. We serve people earning low-incomes in Multnomah County, including seniors on fixed incomes, people with disabilities, people experiencing long-term homelessness, and families with children. We build and maintain affordable housing, administer the federal voucher program, and we provide services to our residents and participants. For example, some of our affordable housing residents participate in our GOALS program, which helps families save for homeownership.

We believe that everyone deserves access to a safe and affordable home. A family cannot thrive without the stability of a home that they can afford. Kids who don't have a stable place to rest their heads at night and have to move multiple times a year struggle to keep up in school. Stable and affordable housing is the foundation of prosperity for individuals, families and for the economic prosperity of our State.

In Oregon, only one in four households that is eligible for federal housing assistance receives it. We need additional resources to address this unmet need, including funding to develop more affordable housing and to preserve the affordable housing that we have.

In the next two years, Home Forward plans to apply for LIFT funds to build 200 new units of affordable housing on land where we currently have site control. One of the projects is a collaboration with Portland Community College to develop 100 affordable homes. These homes will primarily serve families whose lack of affordable housing is a primary factor in risk of their child being placed in out of home care and foster youth aging out of care. The second project would replace 70 units of existing affordable housing and add 100 new affordable homes for people earning low incomes in a high opportunity neighborhood.

In the near future, Home Forward needs to preserve 503 homes serving people with very low-incomes. Of these 503 units, 421 are serving households whose income is below 18 percent of Area Median Income on average. These homes could be preserved for about \$39,000 per home,

which would enable us to achieve our commitment to permanent affordability for households with very and extremely low-incomes in the face of federal disinvestment in affordable housing.

We have seen the impact that an affordable home can have on a family. It can mean the stability that is necessary for a parent to meet the needs of their child and prevent a child from entering foster care. It can mean preventing a foster youth aging out of care from experiencing homelessness. It can mean the difference between a child changing schools multiple times a year and having the housing stability that is necessary for all young people to thrive in the classroom.

There is both need and capacity to build and preserve more affordable housing across the state. For this reason, we strongly support the Speaker's request for \$50 million in Article XI-Q bonds for LIFT and \$20 million in lottery bonds for preservation.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. Please contact Taylor Smiley Wolfe, Director of Policy and Planning, Home Forward at 503-957-8760 or [taylor.smileywolfe@homeforward.org](mailto:taylor.smileywolfe@homeforward.org) with any questions about these comments.

Sincerely,  
Taylor Smiley Wolfe  
Director of Policy and Planning  
Home Forward