

Presentation to Senate Housing and Development Committee

January 26, 2020

Chair Jama, Vice Chair Lithicum and committee members:

My name is Deborah Imse, and I am the Executive Director for Multifamily NW thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today.

Multifamily NW has 2500+ members who own or manage more than 270,000 units of affordable, work force and market rate housing in the state of Oregon.

We all share a common concern about rental housing in Oregon and are searching for ideas to help our residents move forward successfully once the moratoriums expire.

Housing providers are deemed an essential service and as such have been operating in a unique regulatory environment that many of you may not be familiar with. This includes:

- Four separate eviction moratoriums: City, County, State, and Federal all with a matrix of conflicting requirements and effective dates.
- Two major pieces of legislation HB 4213 and HB 4401 resulted in 15 urgent industry alerts to our members, each requiring numerous changes to forms and procedures, to prevent incurring severe penalties.
- minimal rental assistance dollars for renters and extremely slow distribution
- Increasing maintenance expenses as the result of COVID-19

What solutions do we recommend?

Collaborative public/private partnership

- Multifamily NW has worked successfully with Oregon Housing and Community Services to collect rent survey data that has helped form policy decisions.
- MFNW created a weekly HotSheet of immediately available housing which is used by housing case managers helping people displaced by the wildfires.
- **We need data to address the moratorium. We recommend that the state perform a study to identify the need for back due rent and convene a**

renter and housing provider workgroup to develop practical policy recommendations to protect renters and Oregon housing providers and the rental housing inventory.

We recommend robust rental Assistance.

- We are encouraged that \$282 million in Federal Rent Assistance will be arriving in addition to the \$200 million recently allocated by the State. This will go a long way toward alleviating rent burden and creating more housing stability.
- We support ongoing funding of rental assistance for 3-6 months after the moratorium expires.
- Our members are reporting that their renters are confused about how to obtain rental assistance. Oregon's system of delivery is fragmented. Other states have solved this issue by creating a universal application and one single portal where the process begins.
- Another solution to connecting residents with financial need could be to assign social service agency representatives to be present in the courtroom to help obtain assistance and prevent terminations. We understand this was a very successful model with JOIN in Multnomah County.

We are also recommending legislative solutions:

- We support Senator Johnson's **state income tax credit** proposal, Senate Bill 330, that will help both residents and housing providers after all rental assistance is depleted.
- We would encourage you to prohibit local jurisdictions from making their own landlord/tenant rules when a state of emergency is declared, so that all housing providers can operate under a unified process.

While it is critical that we deal with the end of the moratorium and rental assistance immediately, the lack of housing supply in Oregon is something the state must make a priority.

- Even pre-pandemic, according to Smart Growth Oregon, between the years 2000 and 2015 Oregon underproduced 155,000 units

- As Willamette Week recently reported, it is shocking to see how quickly our region has fallen out of favor with investors. According to a report from the Urban Land Institute Portland went from the #3 as favorable place to develop in 2017 to its current ranking of #66 in 2021. These numbers are important indicators if you want to address housing affordability in our state.

Housing Providers are small businesses, which according to the National Apartment Association, contribute 215,000 jobs to the State of Oregon.

In looking towards recovery as a state, investment in expediting vaccine distribution as well as supporting small business are key to creating housing stability through job restoration. As we look towards the future for Oregon's housing, streamlining regulation and incentivizing investment into housing development will be pivotal to ensuring all Oregonians have a place to call home.