



**Testimony related to Housing Recovery in Southern Oregon
Informational Meeting
House Special Committee on Wildfire Recovery
March 15, 2021**

Chair Clem, Vice Chairs Marsh and Lewis and Members of the Committee

Thank you for the opportunity to offer this testimony on our efforts to support the housing recovery in Southern Oregon,

My name is Peter Hainley and I am Executive Director of CASA of Oregon. CASA is a nonprofit community development organization organized in 1988 to support thriving communities. We work with local nonprofits, housing authorities, governments and communities to help meet the housing needs of families, farmworkers, veterans, seniors and the disabled. We also provide asset-building opportunities via individual development accounts.

One of our primary lines of business involves working with residents in Manufactured Home Communities (MHCs) to organize into nonprofit cooperatives so they can purchase their communities and operate them as Resident-Owned Communities (ROCs). CASA is one of 11 Certified Technical Assistance Providers (CTAPs) under the national [ROC USA](#) program. The program originated in New Hampshire where more than 25% of the MHCs in the state are now ROCs.

Our CASA Community Loan Fund is a US Treasury-certified Community Development Financial Institution. Our loan fund currently has about \$12 million in assets. Nearly half of our funds are invested in ROCs. We have assisted in the completion of 18 ROCs over the last 12 years and have a number of purchases in the pipeline in the pipeline, including the largest park to date in Newport (201 spaces).

Before the Almeda fire, CASA of Oregon was working with universities and community partners to study the impacts of COVID on the farmworker community. We were working with a number of organizations in Southern Oregon (Unete, Legal Aid Services of Oregon and Oregon Human Development Corporation) conducting surveys and interviews of farmworkers and their families. After the wildfires swept through devastating the community, we moved to reposition ourselves to assist the community to recover. Foundations, the state and private organizations stepped up to help fund this work.

CASA's current work in Southern Oregon can be classified in three areas:

- Helping to **organize** the Latinx community (see separate document entitled Coalición Fortaleza).

- **Conducting surveys, focus groups and a housing needs assessment** of the farmworker and Latinx community
- **Purchasing land** so as to assist the community in forming a ROC

The first order of business after the fire was to ensure that the recovery was a community-led effort. Since many of those displaced were farmworkers and members of the Latinx community, CASA reached out to partners working on the Farmworker COVID study. Over the ensuing five months, the organizations and individuals formed Coalición Fortaleza so as to be able to sit at the many recovery tables where decisions are being made.

The second order of business for the coalition is to conduct a survey to gather information as to the demographics of those who lost housing and to better understand their current situation. Many of these families did not or could not access FEMA resources. The coalition will then hold focus groups to discuss what the recovery should look like to ensure that it is equitable. Many of the people who lost homes were homeowners. The community would like to be able to continue to be homeowners and to accomplish this by forming ROCs or other shared-equity methods of housing.

Finally, we are looking to purchase land to realize the vision as established by Coalición Fortaleza. We would like to commend the legislature and the E-Board for the investment of \$25 million to begin land banking and we look forward to working with community partners to realize their ideal of community ownership of their future homes.

Thank you!