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Housing Corp.

Kristy Rodriguez –
Housing Authority of
Malheur & Harney
Counties

March 11, 2021

Representative Julie Fahey
Chair
House Committee on Housing
900 Court St. NE, H-272
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Chair Fahey, Vice-Chair Campos, Vice-Chair Morgan, and
Members of the Committee:

*RE: HB 2578 – Support – Disallows, for purposes of personal income
taxation, mortgage interest deduction for residence other than
taxpayer’s principal residence, unless taxpayer sells residence or
actively markets residence for sale*

Housing Oregon is a membership-based statewide association of
affordable housing community development corporations (CDCs)
committed to serving and supporting low-income Oregonians across the
housing needs spectrum – from homeless to homeowner. We support
and strengthen our members by providing training on industry best
practices, peer support networks, communications, and advocacy on
local and statewide policy issues.

HB 2578 is a common-sense and effective response to Oregon’s
statewide housing crisis. We applaud the leadership of Governor Kate
Brown advocating for significant new investments in affordable housing
and homelessness programs. We also need to champion new revenue
sources to fund these programs.

The bill expands revenue to strengthen homeownership and prevent
homelessness without having to raise any new revenue. HB 2578
accomplishes this by redirecting over \$100 million each budget period
from a modest reform of the mortgage interest deduction and dedicates
those funds to the Oregon Housing Opportunity Account.

The mortgage interest deduction costs Oregon nearly \$1 billion per
budget period, making it the state’s biggest housing subsidy. HB 2578
phases out the deduction for Oregon’s wealthiest 5% - those who can

most easily afford housing. It retains the deduction for 95% of homeowners. It eliminates the deduction for owners of vacation homes.

The deduction is structured to benefit the most well-off homeowners – 60% of the subsidy goes to the richest fifth of Oregonians. Many low-income and middle-income homeowners do not benefit from the deduction.

Through a racial equity lens, lack of access to homeownership is a critical issue for Oregon's communities of color. According to the Oregon Housing and Community Services' Statewide Housing Plan, African Americans experience a homeownership rate of 32% compared to a rate of 61% for all Oregonians. For Hispanics the rate of homeownership is 39%.

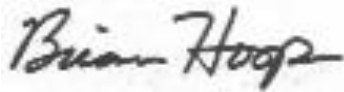
Likewise, when looking at households experiencing homelessness, communities of color are disproportionately affected by Oregon's affordable housing crisis. African Americans make up 6% of our homeless population while being only 1.8% of the total population. Native Americans are 4.2% of the homeless population and 1.2% of the total population.

Rural Oregonians are also disproportionately impacted by the housing crisis compared to other rural areas across the U.S. According to the Statewide Housing Plan, while housing costs are lower in rural areas compared to urban areas, in Oregon they are higher than in the rest of the rural U.S.

Please support HB2578.

Thank you for taking the time to read our letter and for your thoughtful attention to this critical issue. Please feel free to contact me if you have questions at 503-475-6056 or brian@housingoregon.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brian Hoop". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Brian Hoop
Executive Director
Housing Oregon