

March 29, 2021

Joint Subcommittee on Transportation and Economic Development
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

Co-Chair Beyer, Co-Chair Gomberg, and Members of the Committee

I write to you today on behalf of Bienestar in support of HB 5011, and the recommended budget for the Oregon Housing and Community Services (OHCS) Department for the 2021-2023 biennium.

Bienestar is a Community Development Corporation and 501c3 nonprofit organization based in Washington County with a focus on building housing, hope, and community for the wellbeing of Latinx, immigrants, and all families in need in its affordable housing properties in Cornelius, Forest Grove, Hillsboro, and unincorporated Washington County, as well as one property in Columbia County. Bienestar currently houses 509 families (approximately 2,000 tenants) within its 12 affordable housing properties.

Bienestar has seen the devastating impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on our community, and in particular among service industry and agricultural workers living in our properties. Lost hours and lost jobs have meant economic instability, food insecurity and delayed rent payments. In addition, we have seen very high rates of COVID-19 infection in our communities, as COVID has had a disproportionate impact on the Latinx and immigrant communities of Washington County.

Throughout the years, Bienestar has worked with OHCS on numerous programs, including the AWHTC, LIHTC, GHAP, and more recently the COVID Relief Fund. These programs have provided stable housing to some of Oregon's most vulnerable families.

In line with our mission, Bienestar strongly supports the passage of HB 5011 so that organizations like ours can continue to partner with OHCS and work to serve the people of Oregon. In particular, we support the funding for EHA and SHAP, and would like to see the amount increased to \$50 million to help prevent and end homelessness. We also support the AWHTC, in order to incentivize the development of affordable housing for agricultural workers – who we have seen during the pandemic are some of our most essential yet most vulnerable members of our community. We also support the LIFT program, to build new affordable rental *and* to create homeownership opportunities in our community for low- and moderate-income household. Please vote to approve HB 5011. We also therefore support programs to address racial disparities in homeownership.

