



**Testimony on House Bill 2761
House Committee on Housing
February 23, 2021**

Chair Fahey, Vice Chairs Campos and Morgan, and Members of the Committee

My name is Gayle Parrish, and I am a Technical Assistance Manager at CASA of Oregon. Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments regarding House Bill 2761.

CASA of Oregon's mission is deeply rooted in service to farmworkers and other low-income populations throughout Oregon, especially in rural areas. We seek to improve the lives of Oregonians by building affordable housing, neighborhood facilities, and programs that increase families' financial well-being. We are a nonprofit community development organization that strives to support thriving communities by working with local nonprofits, housing authorities, and local government.

Since 2007, CASA has helped residents of 18 manufactured home communities (MHCs) collectively purchase and operate their parks as resident owned communities (ROCs), housing 1072 families. ROCs are nonprofit corporations operated by a resident board which is voted into office by the membership. The membership comprises every household in the community. Throughout the state and especially in rural areas, MHCs provide some of the only naturally occurring affordable housing. As nonprofit corporations, ROCs ensure that housing stays affordable in perpetuity.

We believe that it is imperative to translate important legal and community documents so that all residents have equal access to information. In fact, the first group of residents we helped to purchase their MHC was predominantly Spanish-speaking. Conceptually, we are supportive of the proposed legislation.

However, creating translations adds a significant cost. While all residents own their homes, they rent the space under them. ROCs secure affordable housing by maintaining low rents. As space rents are ROCs only source of revenue, this additional cost would be paid by increasing the rent for residents, many of whom are on fixed incomes or earn modest wages. The ROCs operate on extremely thin margins in order to keep pad rents low.

If the a bill is to mandate language translation, there should be some assistance from the state to cover these costs. This should especially be true for MHCs that have regulatory agreements with Oregon Housing and Community Services (OHCS) that ensure affordability. Additionally, to decrease translation costs, the bill should instruct OHCS to provide document templates of the five most spoken languages in each county.

Moreover, while the bill compels owners to create these translations, it does not require them to make potential and current residents aware of their existence. If residents are unaware of the documents, they will not think to request them. The lack of this requirement limits the bill's potential to realize its purpose: increase access to information. Therefore, the bill should include a posting requirement.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify regarding HB 2761.