

February 22, 2021

House Committee on Housing
Representative Fahey, Chair
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Chair Fahey and Members of Committee,

I am writing to express the City of Gresham’s support for HB 2163. The City of Gresham is a diverse community and, like most places in Oregon, it has faced challenges with housing stability for families and young families in particular.

Meeting even basic needs has become increasingly challenging for many Gresham residents. Thirty-four percent of renting households in our city are severely rent burdened¹, meaning that they spend more than 50% of their income on rent. More than 1 in 5 households (20.3%)² in Gresham have received food assistance in the last 12 months—a rate that is about 30% higher compared to Portland (15%) and Oregon overall (15.8%), and almost double the rate of other similarly sized cities in the Portland metro region (10%). Significant racial disparities exist as well, with nearly 40% of African American families in Gresham receiving food assistance.³ Housing stability is also a significant issue for children, with the Reynolds, Gresham-Barlow, and Centennial School Districts facing a high number of students without a fixed and regular nighttime residence.⁴

The challenge to provide food, stable housing, and other essential needs are likely to be higher over the coming months, as the economic challenges of the pandemic become harder for working families. Every dollar matters, and this rental assistance program can make a difference.

The City of Gresham has taken steps to reduce cost burdens for families, including investing in new affordable housing and administering community development funds from the federal government. Long-term rent assistance from the state will be an additional tool for supporting families and children in need, and it can also help to address systematic racial disparities by assisting communities of color. For these reasons, the City supports establishment of a long term rental assistance program within the Housing and Community Services Department and the creation of rental assistance fund. We urge your support for HB 2163.

Sincerely,



Brian Monberg
Government Affairs Manager

¹ <https://www.oregon.gov/lcd/UP/Documents/2020%20Severe%20Burden%20by%20City%2014-18.pdf>

² Table B22002, US Census ACS 2019 5-year

³ Table B22005B, US Census ACS 2019 5-year

⁴ <https://greshamoregon.gov/WorkArea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=3788>