



AFSCME Support
For HB 2163

February 25, 2021

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

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony in support HB 2163 - the long term rental assistance program. While you all know this, it is always important to acknowledge the disproportionate impact of poverty and housing instability on Black, Brown, and Indigenous People, Immigrants and people experiencing mental illnesses. HB 2163-2 begins to address this inequity by creating this program supporting Oregonians 25 and younger who have experienced or are experiencing barriers that typically lead to housing instability.

Oregon AFSCME Council 75 represents around 24,000 members in a variety of employers both public and private. We represent employees of some of the state's housing authorities and many other locals who work with or support people who would benefit from more investments in longterm housing assistance. Whether it is our members in behavioral health and substance use services and treatment, early learning and child care, or public defense to name just a few they will all tell you that stable housing is the foundation people need to thrive and live their best lives.

Anna Sage, vice-president of AFSCME Local 3135 Home Forward has worked in housing support services with Home Forward and other agencies in Portland. Through her years of work helping people find and stay in stable housing, she has seen how we lean heavily on the existing programs that are a stop gap measure that should be available for short term needs. However, most people experiencing housing instability or homelessness have longer term needs that are not going to be addressed in the 30-90 days of support the existing programs provide. In a previous role, she worked to get people off the street and into housing. While the safety and stability of having housing is desired, getting adjusted to that when you have been without takes time. Add in any complications of mental health and/or substance use service needs, rental assistance is needed for at the very least 2 years years, if not longer. However, providing that long term housing, even with adding in costs for case management and other supports turns out to be less expensive than leaving a person on the street where they end up

* <http://endhomelessness.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/housing-first-fact-sheet.pdf>



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often needing emergency medical services or interacting with law enforcement and rotating through the criminal justice system*. Far more expensive interventions especially over the long term.

HB 2163 -2 is just a start and rightly targets supporting some of our most vulnerable people giving them stability for a few years to build up longer term success. Hopefully, it won't be too long before we come back to expand this to many more people in our state who are in desperate need of long term housing supports- families, older Oregonians, others who would check all the eligibility boxes except for their age. It is heartbreaking to know that such a wise and humane investment can't be provided to all in need.

Please pass HB 2169-2.

Thank you for your work.

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