



Date: February 6<sup>th</sup>, 2023  
To: Senate Committee on Housing and Development  
From: Jennifer Parrish Taylor, Director of Advocacy and Public Policy for the Urban League of Portland  
Re: Support for Private Activity Bonds for Affordable Housing, SB 225

Chair Jama, Vice-Chair Anderson, and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of Senate Bill 225. My name is Jennifer Parrish Taylor, and I am submitting this testimony on behalf of the Urban League of Portland. The Urban League of Portland is one of Oregon's oldest civil rights and social service organizations, empowering African Americans and others to achieve equality in education, employment, health, economic security, and quality of life across Oregon and SW Washington.

Due to historic investment in housing, the statewide pipeline of affordable housing development far exceeds the amount of Private Activity Bonds (PABs) for affordable housing that Oregon Housing and Community Services (OHCS) and Public Housing Authorities (PHAs) receive. There is currently no way to coordinate affordable rental housing project selection for PAB resources across entities in the state, creating uncertainty in the number of projects that can be completed. The crisis that we are facing requires not only that our agencies coordinate but that they are strategic and able to track the state's needs in real time. Additionally, OHCS cannot close on the complex financing of affordable housing deals during the "blackout period" that begins at the new biennium (June 30 of odd numbered years) and ends with the Governor signing the bond authorization bill. Even a one-week delay in closing can lead to cost increases due to tax credit pricing and other costs (labor, supply, insurance) and in a time of greater concerns on budget and subsequent planning, all measures that are smart and cost effective should be employed.

To ensure coordination of affordable housing resources and a clear financing process, Senate Bill 225 makes two changes to the state's Private Activity Bond policy:

- Ensures PAB resources for affordable housing are allocated exclusively through OHCS by allowing OHCS to suballocate Private Activity Bonds to Public Housing Authorities (PHA) (who will still issue the bonds).
- Allow Oregon Housing and Community Services to move forward with financial closings for affordable housing developments during the blackout period, preventing costs increases. This component necessitates an emergency clause on this bill to avoid cost increases this July.

These policies would not only help save money in the process of securing affordable housing developments, but also ensure that we continue to increase our availability of affordable housing stock; stock that is desperately needed by Oregonians. According to the "Recommendations of the Task Force on Homelessness and Racial Disparities in



Oregon” report to the Oregon State Legislature, a task force I currently chair, the data shows that in Oregon, “people who identify as Black or African American are 2% of the total population, 4% of those in poverty, and 6% of those experiencing homelessness. In other words, the percentage of Black people experiencing homelessness is 3 times their share of the total state population.<sup>1</sup>” Additionally, we know that evictions and rent hikes create disproportionate harm to BIPOC communities, that Black women in Oregon are twice as likely to face eviction and that BIPOC Oregonians are more likely to be renters because of systemic barriers to housing and employment. In a most recent report from Forbes Home, which took data from the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Oregon ranks ninth highest in the country when it comes to rental prices. For example, rent for a Portland one-bedroom apartment has risen by 34% since last year and taking into “the average yearly income for Oregon residents, which was just over \$60,000 dollars in 2021, renters are putting 25% of their paychecks toward rent for their apartment or house.”<sup>2</sup>

This is unsustainable and we need cost effective and smart solutions to get our communities housed not just in the metro area, but statewide. We strongly urge you to pass SB 225.

Respectfully,

Jennifer Parrish Taylor  
Director of Advocacy and Public Policy  
Urban League of Portland  
Portland, OR 97227  
Phone: 503.280.2600 ext. 609  
Fax: 503.281.2612

---

<sup>1</sup> [“Findings and Recommendations of the Task Force on Homelessness and Racial Disparities in Oregon”, January 2022, Pg. 15.](#)

<sup>2</sup> [“Oregon Rent Prices Among the Highest in the Country, Report Finds,” Joe Raineri \(KGW\), January 23, 2023.](#)