



26 February 2023

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

On behalf of the Mid-Willamette Valley Community Action Agency, I write in support of Senate Bill 603-01, which will provide essential financial support to endangered and vulnerable renters in Oregon. My name is Jimmy Jones and I am the Executive Director of MWVCAA, where we serve low-income residents of Marion, Polk and nine other counties across Oregon. Annually we provide more than \$70 million in services and direct client assistance for housing, homelessness, energy and weatherization, and early learning programs to more than 55,000 Oregonians in poverty.

Senate Bill 603-01 would create a pilot project in the Department of Human Services to provide 24 monthly payments up to \$1,000 for those who are homeless, at risk of homelessness, or those who are severely rent burdened and below 60 percent of AMI. We write in support of SB 603, which is consistent with other low-income flexible cash investment programs like the Oregon IDA program. The demonstration project would serve as a bridging program for eligible households, which have applied for housing assistance, but often remain for many months, or even years, on waitlists.

We are entering an era of unprecedented housing instability for low-income Oregonians. Given the massive rent increases and other inflationary forces in Oregon, we stand on the precipice of a much larger homeless crisis than the one we face today. At the same time, many pandemic era stability programs have timed out or spent out, and other federal benefits, whether it's the end of the Child Tax Credit or the end of the Emergency SNAP benefits, are hurting low-income Oregonians in 2023. The future will soon grow more dire, as many renters in Oregon face a nearly 15 percent rental increase this spring. The People's Housing Assistance Fund Demonstration Program will help some families avert a crisis, and will give the state evidence of the long-term efficacy of a more permanent basic income effort.

National cash programs have demonstrated a positive correlation for housing and family stability. They will deter evictions, provide families flexible cash to meet their basic needs, and help slow the gathering storm that is our homeless crisis. I urge you to support SB 603, and to pass it quickly out of Committee.

We have troubled times ahead. In the past year alone, more than 500 homeless residents of our state have perished, many dying outside, many of unnatural causes, many far too young, and every single one of them needlessly. For most, timely assistance from effective programs years ago could have prevented their homelessness. What we do here, we do now. And what we do now, will echo on for a generation.

Respectfully,

Jimmy Jones
Executive Director