



Date: February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2023  
To: House Committee on Housing and Homelessness  
From: Jennifer Parrish Taylor, Director of Advocacy and Public Policy for the Urban League of Portland  
Re: Support of Proposed Amendment to Study Housing, HB 2001

Chair Dexter, Vice-Chairs Gamba and Helfrich, and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bill 2001. 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.

HB 2001, incorporating the amendments being considered by your committee on February 23, includes several important elements of the response to our statewide housing crisis. The bill will:

- Provide essential and reasonable negotiated improvements to Oregon's eviction statutes to promote stability and payment rather than displacement and eviction.
- Expand investments in youth homelessness prevention, prioritizing services for school-aged children who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, and their families.
- Provide \$3 million in seed financing for the construction of affordable workforce rental housing.
- Address our long-term housing production challenges by establishing enforceable standards for local jurisdictions to promote the production of abundant, equitable, affordable, and diverse housing options.

We can all agree that the city and the state is facing a crisis when it comes to affordable housing. It is an issue not only for those who are low-income, who are cost-burdened, and at risk of losing their homes as housing prices continue to reach record highs, but for those most vulnerable in our communities, the chronically unhoused. 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.

For many, housing in Oregon is too precarious, unaffordable, and many are one life event away from not being able to cover monthly necessities such as rent; we must look at ways to keep currently housed Oregonians in their homes in the face of skyrocketing rent. 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

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



risen by 34% since last year and taking into “account 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> Couple the exorbitant rents that we’re seeing and the increase of eviction court filings due to non-payment of rent to 68% from last year’s 48% and you have a worsening housing crisis looming.

HB 2001 reflects the urgency of the crisis too many Oregonians are experiencing due to lack of housing, inadequate services, and eviction statutes designed for displacement instead of stability. We are grateful to legislative leaders for your bi-partisan, bi-cameral and immediate action on this package. These measures will help our communities respond to the crisis of homelessness, improve stability and safety for renters across the state, and take essential steps to resolve our long-standing housing supply challenges.

Respectfully,

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