

March 1, 2023

To: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On Transportation and Economic Development

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RE: Support for SB 5511 – Housing & Community Services Dept. Budget

Dear Co-Chair Woods, Co-Chair Gomberg and Members of the Committee:

My name is DeeDee Johnson and I am writing on behalf of Bend-Redmond Habitat for Humanity to urge your strong support for SB 5511, the Governor’s recommended budget for Oregon Housing and Community Services.

Today in Oregon communities of all sizes, too many of our friends and neighbors are struggling to achieve a stable and affordable roof over their heads. Many of our communities are contending with record levels of unsheltered kids, adults and families — enduring potentially life-threatening conditions in extreme weather.

Governor Kotek’s budget includes unprecedented investments along the entire affordable housing continuum. SB 5511 will help to ensure that more members of the communities we are grateful to call home can live in health and safety. We appreciate that the Governor is seeking to significantly expand emergency housing resources — balanced with investments to help our state to meaningfully expand production of additional safe, affordable and energy-efficient homes available to Oregonians at a variety of income levels.

As homeownership providers, the Habitat for Humanity network urges your targeted investment in key programs that expand opportunities for Oregonians to plant roots in their communities and begin to build intergenerational wealth. Governor Kotek’s budget recommendations include the following key initiatives to grow access to homeownership and asset building statewide:

- \$154 million in LIFT for Homeownership: This resource enables affordable homeownership developers to access article XI-Q bond financing to expand our capacity to develop new, permanently affordable homes for sale.
- \$5 million in supplemental, general funds to ensure LIFT Homeownership can reach rural communities and build the density needed to address our supply crisis. *Please note, our network believes that at least \$100 million in general fund resources will be needed to ensure that the suggested LIFT for Homeownership allocation meets its intended reach.*
- \$13.6 million in down payment assistance for homebuyers tied to OHCS lending products: *We see this request as a floor, not a ceiling, for this key resource to expanding first-generation homebuyers’ purchase power in our state — helping to close the well-documented racial homeownership and wealth gaps.*
- \$7.5 million to expand asset building opportunities for low-income Oregonians. The Oregon IDA Initiative is an incredibly effective tool for empowering Oregonians to set and achieve ambitious financial goals, such as first-time home purchases and critical

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home repairs. *We urge you to fund this request at the \$35 million level suggested by JARDHO: the Joint Legislative Task Force Addressing Racial Disparities in Homeownership.*

Specifically in central Oregon, we have struggled to find enough slots to use for all of our Habitat for Humanity families in our home ownership program. We end up being on a lottery or not able to get some of our clients into the match savings program for home purchase. Recently, we have been hosting credit building workshops for our black and Latino community members and we have heard that they believe they could get closer to purchasing a home with additional down payment assistance.

The Governor's Recommended Budget includes more than \$1.46 billion to increase housing stability and community prosperity. Balancing the needs of Oregonians experiencing homelessness with addressing chronic supply shortfalls, the biennial budget represents the largest request any Governor has proposed. We celebrate the Governor's groundbreaking request — and urge you to invest even more deeply in key and effective programs that support access to entry level homeownership and effective asset building opportunities.

Thank you for your consideration and service,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "DeeDee Johnson".

DeeDee Johnson
Vice president of Homeowner Services
Bend-Redmond Habitat for Humanity

We build strength, stability, and self-reliance through affordable homeownership

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