

Submitter: Dana Buhl

On Behalf
Of:

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

Measure: SB5511

My name is Dana Buhl, and I am the Director of Social Justice at First Unitarian Church of Portland. I am also a part of the Leaven Community Land and Housing Coalition - an interfaith collective of more than 50 faith communities across Oregon devoted to using our land to build diverse affordable housing. One hundred percent of our congregations additionally serve unhoused and unstably housed people as core parts of our outreach services, from food pantries to rental support to advocacy.

Having helped a former neighbor who is a political asylee and who is now dealing with 2/3 of his already low wages due to a workers' comp claim, I am seeing first hand how minimal the safety net is for housing, as he struggles to pay his rent. I'm also accompanying a man who has been living since July outside our church, as he tries to navigate the many obstacles he faces to getting back into permanent housing. He has been working nights at a job that feels very tenuous. We have been helping to be sure he has his basic needs met, but trying to secure a path forward is often illusive. Faith communities are often the safety net under the safety net. There is simply not enough we can do to save our communities and neighbors - many of them employed full-time - from houselessness, hunger, and mental health crises for which there are simply not enough resources.

This is clearly an enormous systemic gap that needs an immediate systemic bridge. We simply need more housing and more services for our unhoused and housing insecure siblings. The Governor's budget is one such bridge, and we are strongly in support of this important and immediate solution to our crisis and encourage you to do so as well.