

Sarah March

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To the Joint Committee on Ways and Means

Chairs Steiner and Sanchez, Vice Chairs Girod, Gomberg and Smith, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Sarah March and I live in Southeast Portland. I am a social work and public health graduate student at Portland State University and I am a volunteer with Unite Oregon writing on behalf of HB 3462 and to urge the Ways and Means Committee to consider the importance of emergency funding when planning our state's budget.

In recent years, our state has suffered through devastating wildfires, and sadly as the climate crisis continues to worsen, it is expected that our region will continue to face growing threats of wildfires and other climate-related disasters. During these crises, shelter is one of the most basic needs for people who are displaced and forced to leave their homes, and emergency housing services should be readily available to anyone who is in need of them during these times. Unfortunately, however, many Oregonians face barriers in accessing emergency housing due to their documentation status and ineligibility for federal FEMA funds that are made available during a state of emergency.

HB 3462 addresses this issue by calling on the State to provide additional emergency assistance programs for those who don't qualify for federal resources. We are fortunate as a state to have already implemented robust fair housing standards, and this bill would also ensure that those same standards apply to folks experiencing displacement during a state of emergency. As Oregon continues to build its emergency response policy, HB 3462 is critical to ensuring that what we build is fair, equitable, and accessible for all our communities. To realize this, our state budget must reflect adequate investments in emergency response and ensure that responsible agencies, such as the Office of Emergency Management have the funding they need to implement legislation such as HB 3462.

I understand that there are many priorities in the legislature, but we cannot ignore the increasing likelihood of climate crises and the impacts they will have on our communities. HB 3462 ensures that all Oregon community members, families, and workers are able to access the housing and resources that they need during a state of emergency. And so I urge the Ways and Means Committee to consider this as you plan how our state budget is to be allocated and I appreciate the opportunity to share my testimony with you on this important issue.

Thank you so much!

Sincerely,

Sarah March, MSW, MPH