



We build strength, stability, self-reliance *and* shelter.

April 12, 2023

RE: **Support for HB 2987-A**

Dear Chair Jama, Vice Chair Anderson and Members of the Committee:

My name is Shannon Vilhauer, and I am the Executive Director of Habitat for Humanity of Oregon. I am writing to share our organization's strong support for 2987-A.

Habitat for Humanity has long focused on providing low-income families with the opportunity to break the cycle of intergenerational poverty by owning a key asset: their home. In addition, in communities across the state, Habitat for Humanity provides homeowners of modest means with critical home improvements.

Our critical home repair programs took root in Oregon over a decade ago. Last biennium, we provided 474 affordable home repairs across the state, making it possible for more of our friends and neighbors to live in health and safety. For Habitat for Humanity, this is just the beginning. Too many of our elders are still in need of a ramp to provide safe access to and from their home. Too many families are still anxiously considering how to preserve the health and integrity of their house as the roof begins to fail.

For every home repair that Habitat for Humanity provides, at least another nine households applied for essential home repairs. Together, we are doing everything in our power to better meet this need, including successfully applying for a \$2 million HUD Healthy Home grant to support five rural affiliates that will deliver hundreds of additional home repairs over the next 32 months. We see this work as especially critical in rural parts of the state where entry level home building has been minimal, and we are in danger of losing key housing stock through neglected repairs.

Oregon's Healthy Homes program stands poised to meaningfully expand local deliver of key home improvements in the coming years. I was among 15 stakeholders who participated in the Oregon Healthy Homes Task Force. Members also included representatives from Community Action Agencies, locally based repair organizations and culturally specific home repair providers. We all expressed strong concern around the manner in which the original drafting of the Healthy Homes program capped program delivery costs, along with administrative fees.

Those of us in construction related fields have experienced significant cost increases since this bill was first drafted in 2021. During the same timeframe, retaining qualified staff has become

more expensive for social service organizations. Meaningfully expanding program delivery involves a commensurate increase in internal capacity. HB 2987-A is a common sense technical fix to language that will help to ensure that the Healthy Homes program has the broadest possible, positive impact on the ground in Oregon communities of all sizes.

With your help, Habitat for Humanity and our many community partners will mobilize the volunteers, building materials and local subcontractor services needed to help more Oregon families lead worry-free, healthy and productive lives. We believe that our communities become stronger as we unite to meet our friends and neighbors' basic need for a stable, healthy and affordable place to call home. Through affordable home repairs, our collective efforts improve the vibrancy of entire neighborhoods and preserve housing stock for generations to come.

Once again, we strongly encourage you to support 2987-A. On behalf of the Board of Directors of Habitat for Humanity of Oregon and the 24 Habitat for Humanity affiliates building and repairing homes across the state, thank you for your service and your strong consideration of this bill.

In partnership,



Shannon M. Vilhauer, Executive Director