



# SO Health-E

Advocating for Health Equity

May 2, 2023

**Re: Support for HB 5511 to address Oregon’s statewide housing affordability crisis**

Dear Co-Chair Steiner, Co-Chair Sanchez, Vice-Chairs Girod, Gomberg, and Smith, and members of the Joint Ways and Means Committee,

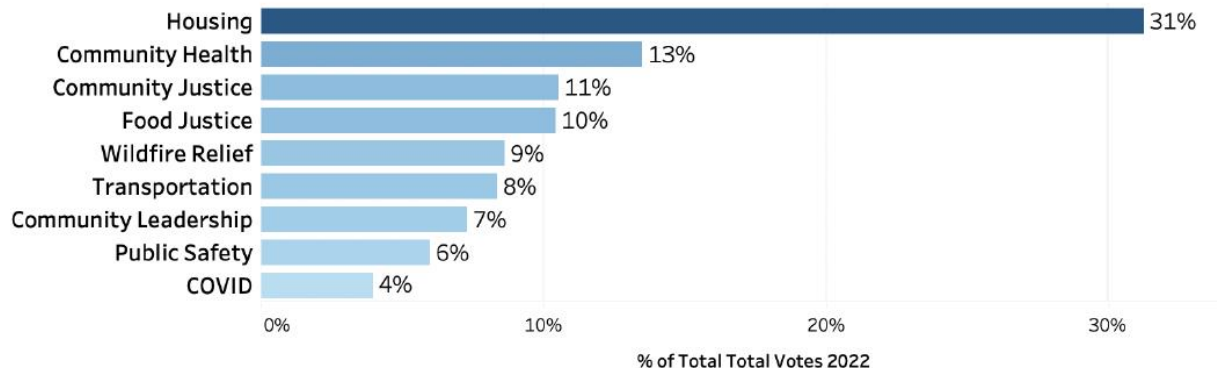
**HB 5511, along with SB 611, are needed now to address the #1 concern for Southern Oregon communities: housing stability.** That’s why SO Health-E, the Southern Oregon Regional Health Equity Coalition (RHEC) serving Jackson and Josephine Counties urges you to support investments in HB 5511 to provide an additional \$100 million in rent assistance.

**In 2022, SO Health-E did a community priorities survey of residents in Jackson and Josephine Counties,** prioritizing the voices of people of color, wildfire survivors, LGBTQ+ people, Spanish speaking households with children, people living with a disability, students, and low-income people.

**The #1 issue that community members prioritized was housing.** Specifically, we heard a lot about housing affordability and the reality that 14.6% rent increases, as were legal in 2023 for properties 15 or more years old, was too high for anyone to afford, outpacing wages and Social Security. After the Almeda fire, reports of extreme increases such as 32%, 47%, 50% are becoming more common in our community. When people have to vacate due to no fault of their own, Oregon’s tight and expensive rental market makes it hard to quickly find a new home.

### Total Votes by Category.

Housing was voted by survey participants as their #1 priority.



**Families in our region can't wait. This critical investment is needed now to stabilize families and communities in Southern Oregon and across the state.**

**Rent assistance has been an essential element to keep our homeless crisis from being even worse.** Since emergency rent assistance ended, evictions have skyrocketed and most of them are because people have fallen behind on their rent. That increases the number of our neighbors who are living in tents, in cars and on our streets.

**Additional rent assistance is a smart investment combined with SB 611A.** Too many Oregonians are one high medical bill, climate fueled wildfire, or unexpected cut in work hours from eviction and HB 5511 will help them stay in their home until they get back on their feet.

**Our community has been in a housing crisis for years, which was made worse by the wildfires of 2020. If Southern Oregon communities are going to be able to recover and rebuild homes and a resilient local economy, we need immediate investments today.** SB 611A is also essential to ensure that rent increases are reasonable so that taxpayer dollars aren't spent to cover extreme and unnecessary rent increases.

**Oregon has the means to make these smart investments that will save lives and taxpayer dollars far into the future.** With historic levels saved – over \$2 billion – Oregon has the funds to rise to the challenges facing us today while creating widespread opportunity for all by investing in our communities through protecting access to food, housing, and health care, and strengthening our workforce through fair wages, benefits, and protections.

**Please invest in a secure future for Oregonians by supporting HB 5511. Thank you for your work on behalf of Oregon communities.**

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michelle Glass". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Michelle Glass  
Policy and Advocacy Coordinator,  
SO Health-E, the Regional Health Equity Coalition serving Jackson and Josephine Counties