



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

Feb. 7, 2024

To: House Committee on Economic Development and Small Business

RE: Support of HB 4041

Dear Chair Bynum and Honorable Members of the Committee:

My name is Shannon Vilhauer, and I am the Executive Director of Habitat for Humanity of Oregon. On behalf of our organization and the 24 local Habitat for Humanity affiliates we serve, I am writing to express our strong support for HB 4041.

Habitat for Humanity of Oregon provides operational support and sustainable financial resources to build the capacity of local Habitat for Humanity affiliates that serve their communities by providing affordable homeownership and repairs. Building household stability and prosperity in diverse communities across Oregon is at the heart of our mission, programs and actions. We believe that access to resources and opportunity is the means to an economically just and vibrant society. We support the targeted investment of resources and services in proportion to the need in communities, particularly those that have been harmed by racism in our society's laws, policies institutions and culture.

The Economic Equity Investment Program (EEIP), created in 2022, directs Business Oregon to provide one-time funding to community-based organizations with solutions that build generational wealth for communities across Oregon. The results are now in and the EEIP is a proven model to advance equitable economic development in every corner of our state.

Habitat for Humanity of Oregon submitted a competitive application to the initial round of the Economic Equity Investment Program and received one of the largest funding allocations: \$850,000. This EEIP investment funded the new "Rural Ready" program, which deploys the grant funding provided by Business Oregon in combinations with \$330,000 in CDFI loan capital, to enable locally based, Oregon Habitat affiliates serving rural Oregon communities to secure (or pre-develop) sites for future Habitat for Humanity Homes.

Twelve rural Habitat for Humanity affiliates submitted competitive applications, seeking a total of \$3.6 million to pre-develop or acquire lots for over 100 homes. The application review committee included

three members of Habitat Oregon’s statewide homeowner advisory council who were compensated for their time, as well as three members of our Habitat Oregon staff team. We scored these applications using three criteria: (1) Implementation of Culturally Responsive Services; (2) Potential for Impact; and (3) Organizational Readiness.

We are extremely pleased to report that 10 affiliates received “Rural Ready” funding allocations and will collectively build 87 Habitat for Humanity homes in the following communities across the state: Bay City, Harrisburg, Hood River, Independence, La Grande, La Pine, Lincoln City, Newberg, Scappoose and Silverton.

We are tremendously grateful to the Oregon legislature for initially funding the Economic Equity Investment Program and to Business Oregon for their supportive program implementation. This timely EEIP investment in Rural Ready will catalyze the construction of another 87 energy efficient homes affordable to households earning up to 80% of the area median income. For working families in this income range, homeownership is key to wealth building. In order to close our nation’s stark racial wealth gap, we need to continue to expand the supply of entry level homes for sale in communities of all sizes.

As shared earlier, the demand for Rural Ready resources was triple the available funds. Across the state, Habitat for Humanity affiliates are working hard to expand our state’s pipeline of equitable, entry-level homeownership opportunities—and we need your help. We urge your strong support of HB 4041.

Thank you for your service,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Shannon M. Vilhauer". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Shannon M. Vilhauer, Executive Director