

February 13th, 2024

Support for Rent Assistance Investments to Prevent Homelessness SB1530 and 1530-3 amendment

Chair Jama, Vice-Chair Anderson, and members of the Senate Housing and Development Committee:

My name is Seth Johnstone, I am the Transgender Justice Program Manager at Basic Rights Oregon. It's time to ensure adequate investment in rental assistance and eviction prevention, to prevent homelessness in Oregon. Oregon has one of the highest rates of homelessness in the nation with an over-representation of LGBTQAI2S+ people experiencing homelessness, yet there are not enough culturally specific or responsive homeless services for this population and more specifically, for queer and trans folks of color. As our housing affordability crisis continues, we also know that more than 80% of all evictions happen because someone is behind on their rent. Rent assistance is an effective tool at preventing eviction and homelessness and providing funding to our culturally responsive organizations in the state means it can go directly to the community at risk.

Basic Rights Oregon supports SB1530 and the -3 amendment that would specifically fund housing services and rent assistance administered by culturally responsive organizations. We support an investment of \$45 million for homelessness prevention services statewide. Additionally, we support \$6.5 million to the Urban League of Oregon for culturally specific housing stability services, \$6 million to the Home Fund at Oregon Worker Relief for housing stability services, and \$2 million for outreach services for residents of expiring affordable housing units.

It's urgent that you invest in proven prevention strategies that keep ALL Oregonians housed, particularly those that are most likely to be impacted by discrimination systemically. We need to address the unique needs of our communities and fund the culturally specific organizations that can get support directly to those in need.

Hardworking Oregonians are struggling to make ends meet and facing eviction and homelessness. It is ten times less expensive to prevent homelessness than it is to respond to it. The funding asks above will keep people housed, while we work towards long-term solutions to end our housing and affordability crisis.

Thank you for your work on behalf of Oregonians.

Sincerely,

Seth Johnstone, on behalf of Basic Rights Oregon