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We believe that everyone deserves to live a life free from violence.

February 13th, 2024

Support for Rent Assistance Investments to Prevent Homelessness

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

It's time to ensure adequate investment in rental assistance and eviction prevention, to prevent homelessness in Oregonian. Oregon is among the states with the most cost-burdened renters in the nation. As a result, Oregon has one of the highest rates of homelessness in the nation.

As a Domestic Violence agency, Raphael House of Portland has been providing safety and support services for survivors of domestic violence since 1977. Besides providing a confidential emergency shelter for these families we have many wrap around services, including supporting survivors with rental assistance and resources to help them maintain their safe housing. We have seen first-hand how necessary rental assistance dollars are for helping to stabilize vulnerable families as they re-establish into a safe new home.

The resources we, and other non-profits, have been able to use to support Oregonians find and maintain a safe home are sun-setting by July 2024. The legislature must fully fund the Stable Homes for Oregon package included in Fair Shot's People's Budget which has had a proven track record of keeping working Oregonians safe and stable and we have been proud to be a part of this Statewide safety net.

Altogether, this package calls for:

- \$45 million in rent assistance through community action agencies and community-based organizations.
- \$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 for immigrant Oregonians.
- \$2 million for outreach services for residents of expiring affordable housing units.

86% of eviction filings are for nonpayment, against people who have fallen behind on their rent. There are close to 2000 eviction filings a month. The availability of rent assistance for tenants

in the critical time of need will help ensure that landlords get paid, evictions are avoided, and most importantly, Oregonians stay housed.

Hardworking Oregonians are struggling to make ends meet, facing eviction and homelessness as a result. Survivors, when faced with living on the street with their children, often risk returning to an abusive partner who may be promising a home and changed behavior.

It is ten times less expensive to prevent homelessness than it is to respond to it. The People's Budget investments will keep people housed, while we work together towards long-term solutions to end our housing and affordability crisis.

Thank you for your work on behalf of Oregonians.

Sincerely,

Emmy R Ritter
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