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Oregon State Legislature
Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Human Services
Chair Campos
900 Court Street NE
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Good Afternoon Chairs Campos and Valderrama, and members of the Committee, for the record my name is Janie Gullickson and I am the Executive Director of the peer-run organization The Mental Health and Addiction Association of Oregon. I have been in this role since 2017.

In my personal experience and in my time doing this work with MHA AO I have learned this is not just a housing crisis or a behavioral health crisis but a crisis of hopelessness and systemic failure. MHA AO serves thousands of people annually in several counties, many of which are homeless or formerly homeless. We would not be able to do that work, without investments in solutions like the ones before this committee today.

The Governor's recommended investment to expand access to the full array of residential treatment programs and fully fund Medicaid including the new social determinants of health programs, are all investments which are critical to addressing the need in our communities. We must be sure that the programs we invest in are comprehensive and holistic to address people's needs so they can be successful in the treatment, dare I say healing and recovery from their behavioral health issues. Using models that include shared housing - whether it be a stabilization house with no sobriety requirement, a recovery house which includes a program of treatment and support for someone who is seeking recovery that includes sobriety, or a sober living environment for someone who is more established in their recovery who just needs a safe place to live while they heal, recover and reconnect with their family and community. We need it all. Recovery doesn't happen in a vacuum and it doesn't happen without a safe place to live.

There are many successful support programs like the ones being offered by MHA AO that can and should be expanded with these investments, but we should also stay open to the evolving array of transition and treatment services that combine a comfortable home with the care people want and need.

In closing, urge the committee to vote in support of the full behavioral health budget and the medicaid budget as outlined by the Governor in her recommendations.