

March 3, 2025

Re: Support For HB 3503

Chair Marsh, Vice-Chairs Anderson and Breese-Iverson, and Members of the Committee:

I am writing on behalf of REACH Community Development Corporation to urge your support for HB 3503, which would expand affordable homeownership opportunities in Clackamas County.

REACH CDC is one of the longest standing and most prolific nonprofit affordable housing providers in the Portland metro region. For more than 40 years, we have developed, owned, and operated affordable housing to serve our community. We see great potential in the model proposed in HB 3503 – not just in Clackamas County but also across the region. In conjunction with this bill, we are asking for your partnership in finding options to transfer the ownership of scattered site properties to residents and first-time homebuyers across our region.

Affordable housing providers have experienced an increase in operating costs, especially in the wake of COVID. As a result, many have begun the process to sell off their scattered-site portfolios. We have a once in a generation opportunity to move these scattered site homes into the supply of affordable homeownership.

This bill provides a unique opportunity to retain the affordability of scattered site homes owned and operated by the Clackamas County Housing Authority, by helping re-position them for purchase through a community land trust (CLT). Through the CLT, these homes will be permanently affordable.

REACH CDC strongly supports the work proposed in this bill. We know that there is a scarcity of for-sale homeownership opportunities across the state, and this is an innovative approach to open up new homeownership models while preserving affordability.

REACH has a vested interest in seeing this program succeed. As a housing provider, REACH operates our own portfolio of scattered site homes in Southeast Portland. Like Clackamas County Housing Authority, we are facing operating cost pressures and we are exploring the potential of selling these scattered site homes. We would love to be able to sell these homes to a Community Land Trust or directly to a low-income, first-time homebuyer, including current REACH residents. **But we can't do it alone.** We know there are REACH residents today that would like to purchase the homes that they are currently renting, and we are in need of home repair and Down Payment Assistance Funds to make this vision a reality. We request partnership and leadership from the state.

We are writing to support HB3503 to boost the work in Clackamas County. Getting this model started is imperative, and we are grateful to DevNW and Clackamas County Housing Authority for their leadership in paving the way forward to make this model possible. We wholeheartedly support their work. We think there is a way to build on the work in Clackamas County to expand its impact in other communities such as Portland neighborhoods REACH serves.

I urge the committee to support HB 3503 and to consider expanding this program to include resources for re-positioning scattered site homes owned by REACH CDC.

By passing HB 3503 we can show a unified commitment to preserving affordable housing between housing providers and homeownership organizations. Let's seize this unique opportunity. I urge your support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'MS', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Margaret Salazar, CEO
REACH Community Development Corporation