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Rita Grady – Polk
CDC

Maria Elena Guerra -
Farmworker Housing
Development Corp

Nkenge Harmon
Johnson – Urban
League of Portland

Erica Mills –
NeighborWorks
Umpqua

Hai Nguyen – East
County Housing (CDC
of Oregon)

Sheila Stiley – NW
Coastal Housing

March 26, 2025

Re: Strong Support for SB 829 with Amendments – Affordable Housing Insurance Reform

Chair Pham, Vice-Chair Anderson, and Members of the Senate Committee on Housing and Development:

My name is Kevin Cronin, Director of Policy and Advocacy at **Housing Oregon**, a statewide coalition representing over 125 mission-driven affordable housing organizations, homeownership developers, homeless service providers, and their support networks, including banks, architects, and contractors. We write in **strong support of SB 829 and its amendments** to address Oregon’s escalating insurance crisis—a top priority for our members.

Insurance challenges are not unique to affordable housing, but they disproportionately threaten our mission. For example:

- **Central City Concern**, a frontline shelter and housing provider, faced a **500% premium increase** (as reported by *The Oregonian*), diverting funds from critical services.
- **Northwest Housing Alternatives** saw insurance costs rise from **10% to 40%** of operating budgets, forcing cuts to staff and resident support.
- **Surplus lines market barriers** delay coverage for affordable properties, as insurers increasingly redline Portland metro areas and properties serving vulnerable populations.

The bill’s three-pronged approach offers immediate relief and long-term solutions:

1. **\$5 Million Premium Relief Program**: Mitigates rate hikes for regulated affordable housing, shelters, and Project Turnkey sites. *This is a lifeline, not a cure.*
2. **Export List for Surplus Lines**: Expedites access to non-admitted insurers, fostering competition in a strained market.
3. **DCBS Study**: Explores innovative solutions, such as:
 - A state reinsurance program (modeled after CA, FL, and TX).
 - Anti-discrimination protections for affordable housing operators.
 - Unified coverage for syndicated investments.
 - *We urge DCBS to leave no stone unturned.*

While SB 829 won’t solve this crisis overnight, it is a **critical first step** to stabilize Oregon’s affordable housing stock. We urge your support and stand ready to collaborate on future reforms. Thank you for your leadership.

P.O. Box 8427, Portland, OR 97207

Sincerely,
Kevin Cronin
Director of Policy & Advocacy
Housing Oregon