



HOUSING SENIORS | CREATING HOPE | PILOTING CHANGE

March 27, 2025

Senator Khanh Pham, Chair
Senate Committee on Housing and Development
900 Court St NE, S-409
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Support for SB 51

Chair Pham, Vice-Chair Anderson, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to share testimony, on behalf of Northwest Pilot Project, in support of SB 52, with -1 and -2 amendments. This legislation takes immediate and longer-term steps to stabilize and preserve Oregon's affordable housing.

Northwest Pilot Project (NWPP) is a social service agency with over five decades of experience in providing housing stabilization services to low and very low-income older adults, age 55 and over, experiencing or at risk of homelessness in Multnomah County. As a service provider for older adults, who are the fastest growing age segment of the population experiencing homelessness,¹ we know that there is a direct link between rental cost burdens for low-income seniors and their risk of homelessness. With more than half of all older adult renter households being cost burdened (paying more than 30% of their rent),² any increase in the cost of rent places an unbearable strain on households that are already struggling. The threat of displacement due to rent increases only exacerbates the risk of further homelessness and prolonged housing instability for low-income seniors.

Over the next 10 years, the affordability restrictions on 7,500 units of affordable rental housing will expire, threatening the security of countless seniors on fixed incomes who will have few other housing options affordable to them in Oregon's private rental market. The reality is that we will not be

¹ Homelessness Among Older Adults: An Emerging Crisis (Generations Journal, Summer 2020), Dr. Margot Kushel, American Society on Aging. <https://generations.asaging.org/homelessness-older-adults-poverty-health>

² Issue Brief: Low-Income Older Adults Face Unaffordable Rents, Driving Housing Instability and Homelessness (February 2021), Justice In Aging. <https://justiceinaging.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Older-Adults-Rental-Housing-Burdens.pdf>

able to preserve all of these units, and thus, it is imperative that we take proactive steps to ensure that these tenants are not displaced or subjected to untenable rent increases.

The -1 amendment establishes a standing Affordable Housing Preservation Program at OHCS, ensuring that the funding needed to preserve Oregon's affordable homes is consistently documented and communicated to the legislature each biennium.

For the new Affordable Housing Preservation Program established by SB 51 -1 to be successful, sufficient bond funding is needed to acquire and rehabilitate affordable homes before they are lost to the market. We call on the Legislature to dedicate at least \$285M for the 2025-2027 biennium to preservation – along with passing SB 51 to establish the framework for those funds to be invested.

The -2 amendment provides property management and asset management capacity for affordable housing properties facing unsustainable cost overruns. These modest investments will have a large impact by reducing vacancies, preventing evictions, and reducing tenant and staff turnover.

Oregon cannot afford to lose the affordable homes we have already invested in. Please pass SB 51, with the -1 and -2 amendments. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Yoni Kahn
Advocacy Director
Northwest Pilot Project