

March 26, 2025

Senator Aaron Woods, Co-Chair
Representative Dave Gomberg, Co-Chair
Joint Committee On Ways and Means
Subcommittee On Transportation and Economic Development
900 Court Street, NE
Salem, OR 97301

Re: Support for HB 5011 and POPs 504 and 505 Homelessness Prevention Resource

Co-Chair Woods, Co-Chair Gomberg, and Members of the Committee,

I would like to thank you for the opportunity to offer Multnomah County's support for HB 5011, the budget bill for Oregon Housing and Community Services, as well as support for POPs 504 and 505 for Homelessness Prevention. These investments are essential to increasing and replacing the state's stock of affordable housing for our families as they plant or re-grow their roots in community, keeping people safe and well in homes as they grow older, stabilize community members if they face an individual or family crisis, and providing support and services for our most vulnerable community members who may be living outside or in shelter.

From the start of the 2025 legislative session Multnomah County committed to advocating for state funds to maintain and expand our local shelter capacity, looking for opportunities to increase funding for programs that prevent homelessness, and expanding housing-related services for those with higher needs for support to remain housed.

A place to call home is essential to our sense of belonging.

This budget reflects the values that Multnomah County shares with the Governor and the Oregon Housing and Community Services (OHCS). We are pleased to see that long-term rental assistance and other eviction prevention and housing stability interventions, such as programs for youth making life and system transitions remain in the budget, and that we'll continue to explore additional funding opportunities to strengthen approaches that are further up stream, in addition to stable funding for shelters and invigorated coordination to address homelessness.

These investments are consistent with the work the Multnomah County is leading in partnership with its local jurisdictional partners as outlined in the Homelessness Response System and the Homelessness Response Action Plan. This systems-level work coupled with the long-term housing work of the Department of County Human Services and the Homeless Services Department – even in the

toughest of times – help us reexamine and shore up our funding approaches and review and evolve our programmatic approaches. This budget and its updated key performance measures, do just that.

Our homes are holders for our identities, history, and joy.

Aging in place is something we want all older adults and elders to be able to choose. An area of concern in this budget bill is the potential for cuts to the Elderly Rental Assistance Program. Older adults, particularly those on a fixed income, are the fastest growing population of unhoused people in our region. Nationwide, the number of homeless adults over the age of 65 is expected to triple by 2030¹. Multnomah County serves roughly 15 percent of the state’s older adults who receive long term services and support where they reside. These services are essential to keeping older adults housed and are nearly impossible to provide to older adults living outside, in shelter, or doubling up on couches. The Elderly Rental Assistance program services very low-income people ages 58 and up, and can help stabilize individuals as they recover from a health or family caregiving emergency, and gives them space for self determination as they recoup or recover.

I will conclude with a note of appreciation. One of the themes of the presentation given by OHCS in the context of the budget for homeless services and outcomes is “don’t lose ground.” I couldn’t agree more. We are at a pivotal moment - and I am examining our local homeless services budget through a similar lens. Progress has been made in Multnomah County, in partnership with the State and the City of Portland. Yet, revenue reductions in the Metro income tax for homeless prevention, shelter and placement require tough choices. Please know that as Multnomah County works hard to serve 40% of the state’s homeless population, I am committed to our continued work to keep making progress.

Sincerely,



Jessica Vega Pederson
Multnomah County Chair

¹ Aaron Bolton, *For homeless seniors, finding stable housing takes a village — and a lot of luck*, NPR, (Mar. 6, 2025, 1:00 PM)

<https://www.npr.org/sections/shots-health-news/2024/12/27/nx-s1-5240042/homeless-seniors-shelter-montana-disability-unhoused-gray-wave-housing-prices>