

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

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

My name is Seth Johnstone, here on behalf of Basic Rights Oregon in support HB5011 and of Policy Option Packages 504 and 505, the Homelessness Prevention Package in the Oregon Housing and Community Services Agency Budget. These POPs will allocate \$173.2 million to ensure continuity of emergency rent assistance and community-based and culturally specific services designed to prioritize prevention of eviction and homelessness in communities across the state.

Basic Rights Oregon's mission is to support LGBTQ+ individuals in the state in achieving lived equality and despite the over-representation of LGBTQIA2S+ people experiencing homelessness, there are very few culturally-specific or responsive homelessness services. The community based organizations that have set up funding programs for housing support and eviction prevention have been working to meet community need but local funds run out swiftly. State funds are important to be replenished for us to continue to work on the eviction crisis.

Connecting people to eviction prevention services is a proven approach to ensure people can stay housed and prevent the cascade of negative consequences when families are pushed onto the streets. The eviction interventions we've created are making a difference for thousands of Oregonians and we must continue to invest.

Many individuals in our community are facing extreme rent hikes that cause inability to cover rent, being let go from employment due to LGBTQ+ discrimination and waiting for BOLI investigations without rent support in the meantime, or other emergent issues that place paycheck to paycheck employees in dire situations in need of often one-time support to keep them from ending up on the streets where they'll face increased risk factors. This heavily impacts LGBTQ+ renters also experiencing racial discrimination who encounter discriminatory barriers to securing and keeping housing and elderly Oregonians, who are the fastest-growing group losing their homes.

Our state's eviction crisis is growing with more than 27,000 cases filed last year. Approximately 88% of evictions are because tenants cannot afford Oregon's high rents.

To summarize, we support emergency rent assistance to prevent homelessness: \$109M is the minimum amount of rent assistance necessary to prevent evictions over the next two years. These funds are distributed by community action agencies and community-based and trusted organizations across the state.

Homelessness prevention services: \$63.2M to support housing navigation services, landlord tenant education and outreach, legal services, tenant supports, eviction prevention, tenant advocacy, and rapid rehousing services.

For all of these reasons, we urge your strong support of this bill.HB5011 and POPs 504 and 505 homelessness prevention resources. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony and for your service to Oregon communities to hear and consider these asks.