

Submitter: Jess Howell
On Behalf Of: South Coast Health Equity Coalition
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On
Transportation and Economic Development
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB5011

Testimony in Support of HB 5011 and POP 504 and 505

Co-Chairs Woods and Gomberg, and Members of the SubCommittee:

My name is Jess Howell and I serve as the JEDIA Coordinator at the South Coast Health Equity Coalition. I am writing to express my strong support for HB 5011 and Policy Option Packages (POP) 504 and 505, known as the Homelessness Prevention Package within the Oregon Housing and Community Services Agency Budget.

As a community member and advocate for health equity and racial justice, I am deeply committed to addressing the critical issue of housing instability in our community. The South Coast Health Equity Coalition prioritizes historically unheard populations—those who are currently most impacted by our current housing Crisis. Our 2023 Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA), along with Advanced Health's Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP), clearly identify housing instability and homelessness as the primary barriers to improving health outcomes in Coos County. Stakeholders consistently named homelessness as the most pressing challenge affecting community well-being.

Oregon renters are currently the fifth most cost-burdened in the nation, with over 27,000 eviction cases filed last year alone. Approximately 88% of these evictions stem from the inability to afford high rental costs. Rising rents are driving evictions which are intensely impacting our most vulnerable community members including families with children, domestic violence survivors, seniors, Black, Indigenous, Community members of Color and Youth. Oregon currently has the highest rate of youth homelessness in our nation.

HB 5011 and POP 504 and 505 will allocate \$173.2 million to maintain continuity of emergency rent assistance and community-based, culturally specific services that are essential to preventing eviction and homelessness. These measures directly address the housing crisis by preserving critical safety net programs that protect vulnerable Oregonians from displacement.

In our local experience collaborating with our local housing authority and community partners, emergency rent assistance has proven to be a highly effective intervention, often requiring just one-time support to restore stability. When paired with culturally responsive and community-based services, these programs not only prevent immediate homelessness but also mitigate the long-term physical, economic, and psychological trauma that follows displacement.

The impact of homelessness disproportionately affects families with children, Black and Indigenous communities, and elderly Oregonians—populations that are already vulnerable and at risk. By investing in proven eviction prevention strategies and partnering with local community organizations that understand specific local needs,

we can break the cycle of housing instability.

I urge you to support HB 5011 and POP 504 and 505 to protect Oregon families and strengthen our community's resilience. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Jess Howell

JEDIA Coordinator

South Coast Health Equity Coalition