

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

My name is Edward Buck-Shannon and I am a Policy Associate at Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon. EMO is an interfaith association connected to more than 750 member congregations across the state. We operate seven direct service programs including our Host Home program Second Home.

At EMO we're proud to be advocating for investment in multiple OHCS programs, the Youth Emergency Housing Assistance Program or YEHA, and the pre-development and feasibility loan programs at OHCS. As an interfaith association, we're aware that there are potentially thousands of acres of church and nonprofit property that could be developed into affordable housing.

The Youth Emergency Housing Assistance program is a critical OHCS service that EMO helped establish last session. Through YEHA Oregon partners with nonprofits to provide assistance to families with k-12 students facing homelessness. This assistance includes help paying rent and utilities, security deposits, work and educational support, and transportation among other services.

YEHA began as a pilot program to address rural homelessness with grantees in 5 counties. The program has been incredibly successful. YEHA grantees have lifted a number of families out of homelessness and prevented many more from becoming houseless.

OHCS has the opportunity to considerably increase YEHA funding from \$5M to \$15M and expand eligibility to children under the age of five, and their families who are currently ineligible for YEHA assistance. At EMO we believe that no one in Oregon, especially our children should be homeless. OHCS programs like YEHA must be supported for that to happen.

Thank you for your time and consideration,
Edward Buck-Shannon
Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon