



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

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

For the record, my name is Hannah Alzgal and I serve as the Housing Justice and Community Safety Policy Coordinator for Unite Oregon. As an organization made up of communities of color, refugees and immigrants, working-class people whom are majority are tenants, we urge you to support the 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.

At Unite Oregon, we have a referral system for those who have tried finding anywhere possible to support them with groceries, rent, medical expenses, school, and other essential costs of living. 75% of all referrals we make are for support with rental assistance to prevent eviction and displacement, with most requests coming from communities of color. The people we see are often exhausted, having had to navigate the universe of community-based organizations and agencies on their own while being repeatedly told by these spaces that no funds are left.

Becoming homeless is one unexpected expense away for most Oregonians. Replenishing these necessary services keeps Oregonians afloat in the midst of our unaffordable housing market crisis.

Oregon renters are the 5th [most cost burdened](#) in the nation, and our 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. As housing costs rise, more families are being pushed into crisis. Oregon families are on the brink, and we must act now with real solutions.

The impacts of this crisis fall hardest on specific populations:

- Families with children facing impossible choices between rent and other basic needs;
- Black and Latine renters who encounter discriminatory barriers to securing and keeping housing;

- Elderly Oregonians, who are the fastest-growing group losing their homes.

The eviction interventions we've created are making a difference for thousands of Oregonians. 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.

Emergency rent assistance immediately stops the flow of families into homelessness. Typically, households need help just once to regain stability. This program, combined with other supportive services, can prevent the spiraling cycle of homelessness and its resulting physical, economic, and psychological trauma. We can shut off the spigot of high-rent homelessness by ensuring the continuation of our critical safety-net.

Replenish funding for proven eviction prevention programs provided by local community organizations that understand local needs, including community action agencies and culturally specific service providers.

\$173.2 Million

1. **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.
2. **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.

Led by people of color, immigrants and refugees, rural communities, and people experiencing poverty, Unite Oregon works across Oregon to build a unified intercultural movement for justice. In order for us to achieve this parity of justice, we must strive towards equitable means in caring for Black, Indigenous and other community members of color who are rent burdened and on the brink of homelessness. Making sure resources are readily available to all is how we do this.

We can't afford to wait. High rents are pushing more and more families into crisis. Every day we delay means more Oregon families losing their housing. Our lawmakers must act now to protect our communities, support our providers, and ensure every Oregonian has a stable framework to build their future.

For all of these reasons, we urge your strong support of this bill. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony and for your service to Oregon communities.

Sincerely,

Hannah Alzgal, Housing Justice and Community Safety Policy Coordinator
Unite Oregon

