

Senator Aaron Woods, Co-Chair  
Representative David Gomberg, Co-Chair  
Subcommittee on Transportation and Economic Development  
900 Court Street NE  
Salem, OR 97301



**RE: Strong Support for HB 5011 and Full Funding for OHCS's Affordable Rental Housing Request**

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

Thank you for your service to Oregon. I am writing to testify in **strong support for full funding of HB 5011**, with emphasis on the proposed **\$500 million to develop new affordable rental homes through the Local Innovation Fast Track Housing Program (LIFT)**.

As the CEO of Community Resource Trust in Salem, I have seen the impact of LIFT funding firsthand. Our organization developed and operates the Cornerstone Apartments, the first LIFT project in Oregon, which provides 180 low-income units with onsite, research-based, tenant-informed resident services.

Since opening, Cornerstone has maintained over 98% occupancy and currently has a waitlist exceeding 750 – a stark reminder of the **severe shortage of affordable housing**. Every day, we and other affordable housing providers face the reality of turning away families, seniors, veterans, and others in desperate need of a place to live. It is a constant reminder of the **severity of Salem's affordable housing shortage**.

**Homelessness prevention:**

Affordable housing helps individuals and families **on the verge of homelessness stay in their homes**. Without affordable options, many people face eviction due to rising rents and financial hardships, pushing them closer to homelessness. With stable housing, people can allocate income to essentials like food, healthcare, education, childcare, transportation, and other basic needs.

**Stable housing is the foundation for community well-being – people cannot improve their lives if they do not have a place to live.**

Since the launch of LIFT in 2016, OHCS, community organizations, local governments, and developers like us have worked to expand Oregon's affordable housing stock and provide critical services that stabilize households. And still, **the gap widens**.

The LIFT program is a proven and effective tool that allows critical housing projects to move forward, **creating much-needed homes and supporting local economies**.

**Affordable housing is an urgent and growing need in Salem:**

- More than half of renters are cost-burdened, and a quarter of them spend over half their income on rent.
- The housing shortfall, which was identified as 6,400 units in 2015, has only worsened as our population continues to grow at a faster rate than the rest of the state.
- Salem is expected to see an increase of 60,000 people by 2035, with low- to moderate-income households driving much of this growth.
- The Salem Housing Authority's waitlist currently includes over 29,800 households (98.89% of them with children), and the average wait time is almost five years long.

**The Salem community is one of collaboration among sectors;** local government, community organizations, and the business community are actively working together to address our housing crisis. Several ready-to-build and upcoming projects in our region rely directly on the funding and selection processes overseen by Oregon Housing and Community Services (OHCS). Without these resources, these projects face delays or cancellation – as the need continues to expand.

OHCS has a proven track record, and the affordable housing community is ready to continue this essential work.

**The question is not whether we need more affordable housing, but whether we want it sooner or later. Full funding of HB 5011 means providing homes sooner.**

I urge you to approve this funding—**our communities cannot afford to wait.**

Thank you for your leadership and commitment to our beautiful state of Oregon.

Sincerely,



**Beth Hays**

CEO, Community Resource Trust