

TO: Oregon Joint Committee on Ways and Means
FROM: Erin Foote Morgan
RE: Joint Committee on Ways and Means April 4 hearing in Warm Springs
DATE: April 6, 2025

Dear Chair Kate Lieber, Representative Tawna Sanchez and other honorable members of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means,

I write to you today as a 20-year resident of Deschutes County, a representative of the Partners for Affordable Housing coalition, a member of the Central Oregon Community College Board of Directors and a member of the Family Access Network board of directors.

In your difficult budgeting decisions this biennium, I urge you to prioritize funding to housing affordability, workforce development and higher education—especially community college—because these are the most valuable investments we can make if we wish to support underserved Oregonians to transform their lives and access greater prosperity.

First, please allow me to share views as a representative of the Partners for Affordable Housing coalition. We are a diverse coalition of impacted people and organizations educating the public on bold solutions that increase housing supply and lower housing costs in Central Oregon.

Our vision is that housing will be available and affordable to every person in our region and we share a belief that elected leaders must take bold actions to solve our communities housing shortages—and that it is our coalition’s responsibility to educate and support you when you do.

As our coalition investigates the most highly impactful work that our coalition could do to support housing needs we have come to understand the full breadth of the problem and the opportunity in Southeast Bend. In this area, 5,800 approved homes are currently “locked up” and unable to be built because of a lack of infrastructure funding to Southeast Bend, including 997 deed restricted affordable homes.

There is nothing that we can do in Central Oregon—and possibly anywhere else in the state—to ensure the rapid development of so many thousands of homes as providing the needed infrastructure to Southeast Bend.

Our coalition members represent the people who need and would live in these homes. Our members are teachers, nurses, law enforcement, unions, small businesses, market rate and affordable housing builders, and nonprofits who serve community members most impacted by the housing crisis in our region.

We are grateful to Senator Broadman for his engagement with our coalition to elevate and work together on unlocking this housing in support of the Governor’s goal to build 30,000 new homes each year.

Second, I urge you to ensure a \$1 million investment in the 3.4-acre Heart of Oregon youth workforce development campus in Redmond.

Heart of Oregon Corps has submitted this \$1 million request to the state for capital funding for this critical regional asset for Central Oregon. We have a community college and four-year university, but lack a youth workforce development campus where students on the workforce track can belong, build their skills and receive the support services needed for them to overcome the barriers they face.

Unfortunately \$1 million was recently lost at the federal level for this capital project. With just \$2.5 million left to raise a \$1 million investment from the state would help get this powerfully impactful project over the finish line.

These youth are not only transforming their own lives through Heart of Oregon programming, but they are solving Central Oregon's greatest issues including affordable housing, wildfire risk reduction, and the childcare shortage.

The demand for these services has far outstripped Heart of Oregon Corps' existing network of borrowed and aging facilities. And many facility partners—such as local school districts—are urging Heart of Oregon Corps to find new solutions after many years of borrowing these spaces, which are very much needed by districts as well.

Our entire region needs this new campus to bolster Heart of Oregon Corps' ability to do the work of the state such as reducing wildfire risk and building affordable homes—these youth are our local pipeline of workforce to solve these critical issues.

Third, we must pass HB 3182 and 3183—providing Basic Student Needs funding to thousands of Oregonians for whom college would be out of the question without this essential support. Basic needs include access to housing, food, transportation, textbooks and other needs.

When we fund access to affordable housing, workforce development, and higher ed—especially community college—we dramatically change the outcomes of underserved Oregonians and our entire state forever.

Please invest in:

- Infrastructure in Southeast Bend to unlock 5,800 homes, including 997 deed-restricted affordable units
- \$1 million for the Heart of Oregon Corps youth workforce development campus in Redmond
- HB 3182 and 3183 to provide student basic needs funding

Thank you,



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