

Submitter: Rob Cochran
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB5006

RE: Support for POPs 501 (Shelter); 502 (Re-Housing); and 504 and 505 (Homelessness Prevention Resources) in the OHCS Budget

Co-Chairs Lieber and Sanchez, Co-Vice Chairs Girod, Gomberg, and Smith, and Members of the Committee:

I am writing in strong support of Policy Option Packages 501, 502, 504, and 505—the Homelessness Shelter, Re-Housing, and Prevention Packages in the Oregon Housing and Community Services (OHCS) budget. These POPs will ensure continuity of emergency rent assistance and community-based, culturally specific services that prioritize the prevention of eviction and homelessness in communities across the state. They will also sustain shelter and re-housing programs that keep Oregonians safe and help them rebuild stable lives.

Cuts to any of these programs will mean more people forced into homelessness, more families living in crisis, and more trauma in our communities. Continuing these services will save lives and promote long-term stability for thousands of Oregonians.

I'm speaking from personal experience as someone who works directly with renters through the Community Alliance of Tenants (CAT), a tenant-led organization that operates Oregon's only statewide renters' rights hotline. Every week, I speak with tenants who are just one rent increase or emergency away from losing their homes. Many have never needed help before, but rising rents, inflation, and systemic inequities have left them with nowhere else to turn. The emergency rental assistance and advocacy services that are supported by these POPs have helped countless families stay housed—often with just a few hundred dollars in aid or a referral to trusted legal or mediation services.

Oregon currently has one of the highest rates of unsheltered homelessness in the nation—and the highest rate of youth homelessness. These packages are critical to strengthening our statewide response. That means not only offering shelter and re-housing support, but investing in prevention. With stable funding, we can interrupt the cycle of displacement before it starts.

Please support:

Policy Option Package 501 – Shelter & Supportive Services: Maintain essential shelter operations that offer immediate safety, especially during extreme weather,

and connect people with life-changing services. \$217 Million

Policy Option Package 502 – Re-Housing Supports: Fund long-term rental assistance and services to help people regain housing and rebuild stability. \$188 Million

Policy Option Packages 504/505 – Homelessness Prevention: Replenish proven prevention programs led by trusted local organizations, including:

\$109 Million in Emergency Rent Assistance to keep tenants housed and stop the eviction pipeline before it starts.

\$63.2 Million for Prevention Services like housing navigation, tenant support, legal services, and culturally responsive advocacy.

We cannot afford to delay action. Every week of underfunding means more eviction court notices, more tents on sidewalks, and more avoidable suffering.

Please support the full funding of POPs 501, 502, 504, and 505. Thank you for your service to Oregon communities and for the opportunity to share this testimony.

Sincerely,
Rob Cochran (He/Him/His)
Portland, Oregon