

TO: Ways and Means Committee

FROM: Grace Fortson, Our Children Oregon

SUBJECT: Support for Homelessness Prevention Resources in the OHCS Budget (HB 5011 and POPs 504 and 505)

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

My name is Grace Fortson, I am the Policy and Advocacy Manager with Our Children Oregon (OCO). OCO is a statewide nonprofit committed to whole child wellbeing through the Children's Agenda- a comprehensive legislative agenda created and supported by our over 135 member organizations across the state. Housing security, specifically through rent assistance, is one of our top priorities this legislative session.

I am writing in strong support of 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.

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 threat of homelessness is greatest for our most vulnerable neighbors: families with children, domestic violence survivors, and seniors. Elderly Oregonians are now the fastest-growing group losing their homes, and

Oregon has the highest rate of youth houselessness in the nation. Eviction, displacement and houselessness have lifelong implications for health, education, and economic opportunities.

To give some context for the economic reality of Oregon's children, I'd like to look at some state-level numbers. According to the most recent data available for Oregon, 13.8% of children are in poverty, 17.3% of children experience food insecurity, 50.5% of renting families experience rental cost burden¹. This means that a large percentage of children in this state are currently facing one or more forms of insecurity due to economic reasons beyond their control.

Solving our houselessness crisis is deeply challenging, but it is not impossible. Preventing eviction is 5–10 times cheaper than letting someone fall into houselessness and trying to rehouse them later. Beyond cost, prevention also avoids trauma, job loss, school disruption, and health risks that come with houselessness.

Ultimately, unstable housing means more than just a move for our children. In Oregon, housing instability is linked to poor physical and mental health outcomes. Additionally, students navigating housing instability have 10% lower rates of attendance. When lower attendance rates combine with high school mobility, we see declining educational outcomes for youth². Ensuring housing stability is not only a moral imperative, it's foundational to supporting Oregon's future.

We urge you to prioritize the critical and proven safety net continued by POPS 504 and 505. Please invest \$173.2 million to continue houselessness prevention and eviction intervention services and legal assistance, which are

¹ <https://ourchildrenoregon.org/publications/oregon-kids-count/>

² <https://www.oregon.gov/ode/StudentSuccess/Documents/SNHIREsearchBrief1.pdf>

making a difference for thousands of Oregonians and stemming the tide of houselessness in our communities. **For all of these reasons, we urge your strong support of POPs 504 and 505.**

Thank you,

Grace Fortson, Policy and Advocacy Manager

View the [2025 Children's Agenda](#)