

Submitter: Chris Bonner
On Behalf Of: POPS 501 and 502 and 504 and 505
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB5006

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

Co-Chairs Lieber and Sanchez, and 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 Agency Budget. These POPs will 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, as well as continuity of shelter and re-housing services and supports.

As a Real Estate professional in my community, I know how important it is to have stable, affordable housing for all Oregonians, not just those that can afford to do so in the open market. We have gone from a place where people come to build a life to one where many of our youngsters and elders must leave to afford housing. This destroys communities and separates families. In the end, a stable community is the most important thing we as a State can provide, as it allows folks to live with dignity and in turn, to offer that support to their friends and family as well.

Please support:

Policy Option Package 501: Please maintain shelter and supportive services operations. The ongoing shelter system is critical to providing stability and shelter during extreme weather conditions. Services connect vulnerable populations to vital services that help them transition into stable housing. \$217 Million

Policy Option Package 502: Please support re-housing and assistance to retain that housing. This program provides up to 2 years rental assistance and support for folks to find housing and re-establish stability after experiencing homelessness. \$188 Million

Policy Option Packages 504/505: Please 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

Emergency rent assistance to prevent homelessness: \$109 Million 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.

Homelessness prevention services: \$63.2 Million to support housing navigation services, landlord tenant education and outreach, legal services, tenant supports, eviction prevention, tenant advocacy, and rapid rehousing services for tenants who get displaced.

Again, we can not afford to follow the current trajectory. The key to strong communities is a readily accessible safety net for vulnerable individuals and families. We urge your strong support of these Policy Option Packages.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony and for your service to Oregon communities.

Sincerely,

Chris Bonner, Realtor, citizen and non-profit volunteer