



February 22, 2022

Joint Committee on Ways and Means
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Co-Chair Steiner Hayward, Co-Chair Sanchez, and Co-Vice Chairs Gomberg, Girod, and Smith;

I write to you on behalf of Home Forward, the Public Housing Authority (PHA) for Multnomah County and the largest provider of affordable housing in the State of Oregon. Home Forward serves more than 15,500 households earning low-incomes by providing affordable housing and administering rent assistance. I write to you in strong support of a \$15 million investment in an Affordable Housing Stabilization Fund. This fund would be a low barrier way for affordable housing providers to alleviate debt of their residents and promote housing stability.

Home Forward alone estimates \$3.4 million in unpaid resident debt which is \$2.4 million higher than a typical year. This outstanding debt is also after Home Forward accessed other landlord based rent assistance resources like the first Affordable Housing Stabilization Fund and the Landlord Compensation Fund which enabled us to alleviate all resident rent debt from March 2020 to Dec 31, 2020,

We greatly appreciate the significant investments the legislature has made in tenant based emergency rental assistance through programs like the Oregon Emergency Rental Assistance Program. However, residents of affordable housing have faced significant barriers in accessing these funds. Home Forward resident services staff have been reaching out to residents with debt to provide support in completing the OERAP application and for many residents, the barriers to completing the application are too high.

The Affordable Housing Stabilization Fund model is based on a program that OHCS administered at the beginning of the pandemic and was an extremely low barrier way for affordable housing providers to alleviate the debt of all residents.

We urge you to invest in a second round of this program to promote the housing stability of affordable housing residents who have faced barriers to applying for OERAP.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment in support of this budget ask today.

Sincerely,

Taylor Smiley Wolfe
Director of Policy and Planning
Home Forward