



February 16, 2026

Co-Chair Fred Girod and Co-Chair

Rob Nosse

Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Capital Construction

900 Court Street NE

Salem, Oregon 97301

Dear Co-Chair Girod, Co-Chair Nosse, and Members of the Joint Subcommittee on Capital Construction,

On behalf of the Bend Chamber and the businesses we represent across Central Oregon, we respectfully submit this testimony in strong support of allocating \$100 million in General Obligation Bonds for the LIFT Homeownership Program in Senate Bill 5702.

Housing affordability is not only a social challenge in our region - it is an economic imperative. Employers across Central Oregon consistently identify housing availability and cost as one of the top barriers to workforce recruitment and retention. Teachers, health care professionals, hospitality workers, first responders, and skilled tradespeople are increasingly unable to afford to purchase homes in the communities they serve.

Today, more than half of Bend's workforce commutes from outside the city limits due to housing costs. This reality places strain on families, reduces employee retention, increases transportation and infrastructure pressures, and impacts overall economic productivity. Without meaningful intervention, these pressures will continue to intensify and limit our region's ability to grow responsibly.

The LIFT Homeownership Program is one of Oregon's most effective and proven tools for expanding affordable homeownership opportunities. Importantly, these investments create lasting assets. Many LIFT-supported homes are placed in community land trusts or structured to remain permanently affordable, ensuring that public dollars support not just one household, but multiple income-qualified homeowners over time. This is a long-term capital strategy that builds generational stability and strengthens local economies.

Our community partners in Central Oregon have shovel-ready projects prepared to deliver affordable homeownership opportunities now. Each \$1 million invested through LIFT supports approximately five new homes while leveraging additional local and private resources. A \$100 million statewide investment would create roughly 500 homes - homes that remain affordable for decades and provide enduring public benefit.

Oregon faces a significant housing production gap. Meeting the scale of this challenge requires targeted, strategic capital investments. LIFT represents exactly that: a practical, accountable approach that supports workforce housing, strengthens community stability, and advances long-term economic resilience.

The Bend Chamber urges you to include \$100 million for the LIFT Homeownership Program in SB 5702 and ensure that Central Oregon communities are fully included in the statewide response to Oregon's housing shortage.

Thank you for your consideration and for your commitment to addressing Oregon's housing needs.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sara Odendahl", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Sara Odendahl
CEO
Bend Chamber of Commerce