

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

March 31, 2023

The Honorable Tom Cole Chair
Subcommittee on Transportation
Housing and Urban Development Committee
on Appropriations
2358-A Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mike Quigley Ranking
Member Subcommittee on Transportation
Housing and Urban Development Committee
on Appropriations
1036 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Cole and Ranking Member Quigley:

I appreciate the opportunity to testify about my priorities and concerns as representative of Washington state's 8th congressional district. I write to respectfully request consideration of the following priorities as you work to finalize legislation for the FY24 Appropriations Transportation, Housing, and Urban Development, and Related Agencies subcommittee.

Washington state has a diverse set of housing, transportation and development needs. Washington's 8th District, my district, depends on a variety of programs to keep our communities housed, connected, and healthy. My district has diverse housing needs: tribal, veteran, senior, and many other diverse populations benefit from programs funded under this subcommittee. I would like to center this testimony on the following issues:

- Community Project Funding for three important projects within the district: Pearl Street Veterans Housing project, **Bridge for Kids**, and **Pangborn General Aviation Terminal**;
- Concerns with DOT implementation of Culvert Aquatic Organism Passage (AOP) Program (**fish passage barrier/culvert removal program**), as part of the Infrastructure and Jobs Act and Inflation Reduction Act;
- Important HUD Housing program funding.

Community Project Funding

First, I would like to highlight three community projects I submitted to this committee. The first is Hopesource's **Pearl Street Veterans Housing** project. Nearly half of all Kittitas County residents over 65 are veterans, which is a higher rate than state and national averages. Unfortunately, many of these individuals are on fixed or limited incomes, which cannot meet the high cost of rental housing units in rural Kittitas County. While funding exists for rental support and support services for veteran households, securing affordable housing units remains a challenge in the low-vacancy and cost-burdened housing market of Kittitas County.

The Pearl Street Veterans Housing project would remedy that by developing a 12-unit residential building dedicated to low-income senior veterans in Kittitas County. The three-story building

will include affordable, ADA-accessible apartments with dedicated parking. Eligible residents will be veterans who are 60 years old or older and whose income is at or below 60% Area Median Income. If you dedicated your life to protecting our country, it's our responsibility to make sure you receive the best service and care possible.

The second project I'd like to highlight is the City of Orting's **Bridge for Kids**. Orting is a small city of less than 10,000 residents in my district which sits in the shadow of Mt. Rainier. The main throughway for the city is State Route 162, that cuts through the town and by the school. This bridge for kids would be a pedestrian bridge across the busy highway. Not only would this bridge help kids on their way to and from school, it is an important evacuation route in the event of a lahar. A lahar is a mixture of mudflow, volcanic material, and debris that may happen after an eruption. Orting, with its proximity to Mt. Rainier, is right on the path of danger if volcanic activity begins. Having this bridge completed would make sure kids and their families have a route to safety.

Lastly, I want to elevate the Chelan-Douglas Regional Port Authority's **Pangborn General Aviation Terminal**. Mr. Newhouse and I are both submitting this project as it impacts both of our districts. The 1960s era terminal cannot provide adequate services to both passengers getting where they need to go and support important wildfire response for the community. Pangborn needs a modern terminal, because this airport does more than move people: it moves equipment for wildfires. Beginning January 2024, the Washington Army National Guard intends to relocate its operations from Fairchild Air Force Base to Pangborn. This is so helicopters can be closer to the operational area for central Washington wildfire response.

The modernization project will benefit the nearly 125,000 residents of the Wenatchee Valley, along with major employers such as the agriculture and data center industries, through a modern and welcoming terminal facility to support economic development opportunities across Chelan and Douglas counties.

DOT implementation of Culvert Aquatic Organism Passage (AOP) Program

In 2018, the Supreme Court ruled that Washington state had an obligation to restore habitat access to meet its promises to the tribes. Washington State will have to replace each fish-blocking culvert with a larger design. It's estimated the ruling will require replacement of about 1,000 state-owned culverts at a cost of about \$4 billion to the state. The state has until 2030 to meet that requirement.

For the first time, a new funding stream was championed in IJA to provide significant funding to remove salmon-blocking culverts which will improve thousands of miles of salmon habitat. However, my office has heard concerns about how the program is structured from local fish passage project sponsors.

Cities and counties are managing a tremendous amount of aging transportation infrastructure. Local governments and their associated city councils and county commissioners are prioritizing transportation projects based on the needs and safety of their traveling public. These same local

governments also have lists of transportation related fish passage barriers, that despite being serviceable, would be a benefit to salmon recovery if replaced.

However, eligibility requirements for executing grant agreements to receive Federal Highways Administration (FHWA) funding can take local government staff six months to two years to complete at an up-front cost of \$100k. I am also deeply concerned by the cost share requirement and the current administration of grants on a reimbursable basis further constrains the ability of local governments to capitalize on these funds. Local governments have a limited capacity for public works based on the revenue from local sales and property taxes. Therefore, transportation projects done purely for the benefit of salmon recovery are addressed when easy to obtain outside funding and staff capacity are available.

HUD Housing program needs in Washington's 8th

Today, Washington state has a shortage of 174,821 rental homes,¹ over 5,000 of which are in my district. We have some innovative solutions in the state. Chelan, Leavenworth, and Wenatchee, WA all participate in Community land trusts. These are nonprofit, community-based organizations designed to ensure community stewardship of land. Community land trusts can be used for many types of development (including commercial and retail) but are primarily used to ensure long-term housing affordability.

Investing in programs like the **Self-help and Assisted Homeownership Opportunity Program (SHOP)**, **Rural Capacity Building (RCB)** and **HOME Investments Partnership Programs (HOME)** will allow constituents to grow wealth and build a stable life for their families. Self-help and Assisted Homeownership Opportunity Program (SHOP) has enabled local nonprofit organizations to build more than 35,000 homes and house more than 100,000 adults and children. Of these homes, approximately 50% are in rural areas, and approximately half of the families served have incomes below 50% of the area median income (AMI). SHOP grantees have raised a significant amount of private leverage and brought in more than \$3.4 billion of investment into communities. This is a program used to assist Habitat for Humanity in my district build homes so families can have a brighter future.

HUD's RCB Rural Capacity Building program allows national organizations to provide a wide range of help to local housing nonprofits and others working to develop or preserve affordable homes. This program works nationwide—providing training, technical assistance, information, and financing—to serve the neediest rural communities across the country. We have found time and time again that counseling works and translates into sustainable homeownership.² Giving families these tools will allow them to grow wealth and build a foundation.

Washington's 8th District is also home to over 50,000 veterans. We have more than 1,500³ homeless veterans in the state, and investing in programs to keep our veterans housed is critical. If you dedicated your life to protecting our country, it's our responsibility to make sure you

¹ <https://nlihc.org/housing-needs-by-state/washington>

² https://www.hud.gov/sites/documents/OHC_COUNSELINGWORKS1214.PDF

³ <http://walegion.org/index.php?id=156>

receive the best service and care possible. Whether it's help securing earned benefits, accessing timely high-quality healthcare, or transitioning into a new career or school, the government should be a partner. Housing is no different. That's why I am supportive of the **HUD VASH program**. The program combines rental assistance, in the form of a HUD voucher, with case management and supportive services provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). By combining services, Veterans are provided the stable environment necessary for addressing the factors that led to their homelessness.

I thank you for the opportunity to share my priorities and appreciate your consideration of these important projects and programs.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Kim Schrier". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "K" and "S".

Kim Schrier, M.D.
Member of Congress