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Representative Julie Fahey, Chair
Representative Winsvey Campos, Vice Chair
Representative Lily Morgan, Vice Chair
Members of the House Committee on Housing
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court Street NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

Re: House Bill 4037

Dear Chair Fahey, Vice Chair Campos, Vice Chair Morgan,

As a long-term resident who has raised my family in Salem and Keizer and as a business owner who has been running a small business in the Salem/Keizer metropolitan area for the last three decades I have seen, firsthand, the effects of the heartbreaking and growing homeless crisis in our community. This is a crisis for not only those who are homeless, but also for the neighborhoods and the business community. It is also a crisis of spirit as our hearts break as homeless people are removed from under bridges only to be exposed to our harsh winter conditions huddled around downtown businesses and parks.

As Covid-19 related rent deferrals come to an end I fear that this crisis will only get worse. At the same time, under current Oregon Laws (as stated in Martin v. Boise 902. F.3d 1031, and Oregon House Bill 3115 signed by Governor Brown on June 23, 2021) the city has limited options to address the homeless issue.

Fortunately, the city of Salem has taken many amazing steps to tackle this issue. Unfortunately, it is not enough. Other groups such as Church in the Park have also stepped up to provide temporary emergency housing with micro-shelters and overnight parking areas. This has helped beyond measure for those they are able to serve, but again, it is not enough because there are not enough suitable sites to place the micro-shelters in the metropolitan area. For this reason I was thrilled to see that Representative Hoy and others have proposed House Bill 4037. I would urge the committee and Legislature to please pass this bill into law with the utmost haste.

Very truly yours,

Rich Walsh

Richard M. Walsh
Attorney at Law