



Mid-Columbia Community Action Council
Serving Hood River, Wasco and Sherman Counties
312 E. 4th St.
The Dalles, OR 97058

Chair Fahey and Housing Committee Members,

My name is Kenny LaPoint and I am the Executive Director of Mid-Columbia Community Action Council (MCCAC) serving Hood River, Wasco and Sherman Counties. MCCAC has a tripartite Board of Directors and a small staff of 16 with over 70% of the MCCAC staff being from our BIPOC community, Latino/a community and/or are persons with lived experience in homelessness and poverty. In 2020, MCCAC served over 5,200 members of the Mid-Columbia community and 33% of those served are BIPOC or from the Latino/a community. Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, MCCAC has ramped up its programs and partnerships to ensure that our most vulnerable friends and neighbors have access to non-congregate emergency shelter, energy assistance, weatherization, homeless assistance and homeless prevention resources. MCCAC also partnered with the Mid-Columbia Housing Authority to provide nearly \$1.5 million in rental assistance to 194 households impacted by COVID-19. To date, 35% of the 194 households served with COVID-19 rental assistance are BIPOC or Hispanic/Latinx community members. MCCAC has worked vigorously over the past year to stand up non-congregate shelters to meet the needs of our homeless friends and neighbors while working to fill the statewide shelter gap of 5,800 shelter beds as identified in OHCS' 2019 Statewide Shelter Study. This work required strong partnership building, intense advocacy in the face of NIMBYism, site identification and sustainable funding. As a region, we are very proud that we now have 62 nightly shelter beds across our three counties and a longer term shelter site in the city of The Dalles. That was no easy feat.

As represented in the data and narrative above, MCCAC and its strong network of community partners have worked collaboratively to design a service system that helps stabilize our most vulnerable community members and prioritizes services to BIPOC community members and our Latino/a friends and neighbors. That system was able to be developed largely in part due to the sustainable funding established with the expansion and on-going commitment of funding by the Oregon Legislature to the Emergency Housing Assistance (EHA)

and State Homeless Assistance Programs (SHAP) in the 2017 and 2019 Legislative Sessions. Partnerships have been established, emergency shelters have been developed, staff have been hired, programs have been successfully implemented and at the end of the day our community members have been served. House Bill 2100, in its current form, walks that work back. Commitment to on-going operations of community programs and shelter sites will be minimized and in some cases may need to be shut down. Based on the current version of HB2100, a 20% cut to existing funding would result in over 1,000 individuals currently receiving services through MCCAC and its subrecipients organizations losing the support system provided to them. While HB2100 would potentially divert services to 1,000 individuals who are not currently being served, simple logic says that it does nothing to reduce the overall need. In addition to the client impacts from the funding cuts proposed, layoffs of staff who work for MCCAC and its subrecipients/subcontractors would be a likely consequence. Many of these subrecipients/subcontractors are key partners in the delivery of homeless service programming to our BIPOC and Latino/a community members who have historically lacked access to housing services. Our region has worked hard to put partnerships, policies and systems in place to address the disproportionate impact of housing instability on BIPOC and Hispanic/Latino community members; and we cannot afford any impacts to the progress we have made.

As a core value of our agency, MCCAC shares the commitment to Equity and Racial Justice. However, there are unintended consequences of HB2100 that we believe will do the opposite of the bills intent. We must plan and consider those impacts and work to ensure our system has the resources needed to meet the need of all community members impacted by the housing and homeless crisis we are experiencing. Lastly, we must not break or fragment the ability of communities to develop and coordinate systems to address housing instability. These systems only work if they are localized and collaborative and HB2100 hinders both. If we are truly going to have an impact on this crisis, we should not be cutting funding to programs, facilities and people. We should double down on the resources put into our most vulnerable community members and facilitate collaboration that leads with equity. We should be increasing our resources so we can serve 1,000 more and work towards an end to this crisis.

In service to community,

Kenny LaPoint, Executive Director