



Umpqua HEART

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March 25, 2023

To: Oregon Legislature

Re: In support for limited liability in Rural Communities.

As Oregon continues to experience a housing and homelessness crisis, recent state investments in shelter and services have yet to reach all communities in the state, and rural areas will continue to be significantly underfunded. Cities and counties located in the Rural Oregon Continuum of Care have historically received less federal and state investment to assist in addressing various services and aspects of care.

Umpqua Heart is an organization, specifically created, to create safe ground living situations for those experiencing chronic or episodic homelessness by creating urban camping, micro-shelter, and tiny home initiatives with appropriate amenities. However, our served areas do not have the capacity to withstand the legal challenges associated with offering designated safe resting places or campgrounds with basic services.

By limiting liability, SB 847-5 encourages rural communities to designate safe resting places and campgrounds while providing unhoused residents with reliable access to a space of a certain size within which they can erect a tent or park a vehicle and keep their belongings away from hazardous areas, sensitive environmental lands, and high traffic neighborhoods or right of way. Basic amenities like safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, and waste management services will also be provided, which will improve access to emergency services.

Umpqua Heart firmly supports this measure's capacity to improve access to care and resources for small, rural communities throughout Oregon. We strongly urge the legislature to approve SB 847-5 and similar measures to help address this critical need.

Thank you,

Wayne Ellsworth

Executive Director Umpqua Heart