



10 February 2023

Chair Dexter, Vice-Chairs Gamba and Helfrich, and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the [Mid-Willamette Valley Community Action Agency](#), I write in support of House Bill 2001-01, which is an important and prudent response to our gathering homeless crisis. My name is Jimmy Jones and I am the Executive Director of MWVCAA, where we serve low-income residents of Marion, Polk and 11 other counties across Oregon. Annually we provide more than \$70 million in services and direct client assistance for housing, homelessness, energy and weatherization, and early learning programs to more than 55,000 Oregonians in poverty.

Mid-Willamette Valley Community Action Agency was chartered as part of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, and became an independent non-profit in 1969. For the past 54 years we have provided anti-poverty, self-sufficiency and stabilization services to low-income residents of Marion, Polk, and beyond. We offer nine program areas in three divisions, Early Learning and Child Care, Housing and Homelessness, and Energy and Weatherization. Since May of 2020, our [ARCHES Project](#), the homeless and housing division of MWVCAA, has distributed \$36,340,899 to 4,955 Marion-Polk Households, preventing at least two thousand evictions. These funds include the Legislature's prevention programs in 2020 and 2021, the federal Emergency Rental Assistance Program, and the Legislature's highly success Oregon Diversion Assistance Program, which allows agency staff to interdict evictions in the court house before families lose their homes.

In 2022, ARCHES rehoused 626 homeless households in Marion-Polk. By working closely with our clients, we also graduated 244 households from state and federal assistance programs into self-sufficiency. In 2022, we provided emergency warming shelter to 774 unique individuals in Marion-Polk, funded by the State of Oregon and the City of Salem. We served another thousand unique clients in our [ARCHES Day Center](#) at 615 Commercial Street in Salem. We sheltered 86 Oregon veterans in 2022, funded by state programs and a federal Veterans Administration grant at our [Tanner Project](#) shelter on Center Street in Salem. And our [ARCHES Inn](#), a 75-room Project Turnkey Motel, funded by the State of Oregon and the Oregon Community Foundation, sheltered another 69 households, including wildfire survivors from the Labor Days fires of 2020. In 2023, we will open a second 75-room Project Turnkey Motel, the [ARCHES Lodge](#), on Fisher Road in Salem. And in April we will open the City of Salem's [Navigation Center](#), a 75-bed exceptionally low barrier congregate residential facility, funded by the State of Oregon, Marion County, and the City of Salem. We also operate [Taylor's House](#), the region's only overnight shelter for homeless youth, which has been in operation since 2018, also funded by state resources. In 2022, Taylor's House sheltered 45 endangered youth, for a total of 1,566 bed nights in a ten-bed facility. In 2023, we will open a second youth shelter in Monmouth, pairing it up with a unique rapid re-housing program for youth ages 16-24. Since 2021, we have provided state assistance for wildfire survivors, serving 179 households with \$4,224,416 of assistance through the Wildfire Recovery and Resilience fund.

House Bill 2001-01, and appropriate funding supports, is the next step in turning our homeless crisis around. For rural Oregon, there are three critical elements here that merit special attention.

- House Bill 2001-01 extends the emergency declaration to the full state, making certain that the 26 counties that were not funded by the Emergency Order have access to adequate resources, centered on time-honored "whole state" principles of geographic funding equity.
- The Community Action Network of Oregon, which has been the state's frontline poverty and housing prevention system for thirty years, has not seen any increase in its baseline operational budgets, in particular the Emergency Housing Account and the State Homeless Assistance Program, since 2019. We have been subject to the same institutional stresses as everyone else, with inflation and labor supply issues. We are the largest prevention network in Oregon, covering the entire state's geography, yet we are doing this work with pre-pandemic, 2019 level resources. The Emergency Housing Account, in particular, is critical because it provides the operational funds, leverage, and matching funds to make millions of other grants viable

Oregon. These new resources will help, but the network is in critical need of increases to EHA and SHAP, the latter of which makes sheltering possible, especially in rural Oregon counties. This bill provides a pathway for those necessary increases.

- Rural homeless supports in Oregon remain inadequate. Not only do Community Action Agencies need additional funds, but other critical supports should also follow, including fully funding the Oregon Mayor's Association request of the Legislature, renewing and expanding the highly successfully HB 4123 pilots, and protecting current pipeline projects, like Navigation Centers, Project Turnkey motels, and further funding for the highly successful Out of the Cold program, a fast and flexible fund for rural Oregon counties.

HB 2001-01 contains critical elements designed to reduce unsheltered homelessness and increase housing supply:

- Provides essential and reasonable negotiated improvements to Oregon's eviction statutes to promote stability and payment rather than displacement and eviction.
- Expands investments in youth homelessness prevention, prioritizing services for school-aged children who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, and their families.
- Gives authority to allow the Governor's recent Executive Orders relating to homelessness to apply to the whole state, removing the current barrier to this application.

We are particularly writing to urge support of Sections 14-26 of HB 2001, which contain essential and reasonable negotiated improvements to Oregon's eviction statutes to promote stability and payment rather than displacement and eviction. These Sections of the bill:

- Expand the time after a notice of nonpayment before being taken to court from 72 hours to 10 days.
- Amend first appearance and trial timelines to allow endangered tenants more time to find help.
- Provide that an eviction case will be dismissed if payment is made before final judgment.
- Streamline the eviction sealing process, removing a procedural barrier to future housing stability.

Today, every family entering a new housing development, and every person proudly holding a key to their own front door for the first time in years, is at risk of being a few dollars short on rent and losing everything to eviction. These protections are critical for Black Oregonians in particular, as landlords filed evictions against Black women renters at double the rate of or higher than their white renters in Oregon and in 16 other states, according to the ACLU's Women's Rights Project and Data Analytics team. While there are no national or local statistics of how many evicted people experience homelessness, surveys in several communities say that between 12-37% of people who have been evicted became homeless at some point, or say eviction was a cause of homelessness. From my personal work with hundreds of high-needs chronically homeless Oregonians, periods of youth homelessness and evictions are endemic to the homeless condition. Communities already facing historical and systemic barriers to jobs, housing, health care, opportunity and wealth are paying an unfair price for Oregon's unfair and rushed eviction laws.

This bill **does fall short** of "all we can do" to prevent evictions in Oregon, and it needs to do more to prioritize sustaining current work and well-functioning systems. The additional resources that will follow in the fiscal and, especially, "the right of redemption" here in HB 2001-01, will help stem a gathering eviction tide. Setting "Safe Harbor" aside, however, creates an unnecessary and additional window of vulnerability for low-income Oregonians, who might have had more time to gather rental assistance, had that provision survived this compromise process.

In closing, we ask your support of HB 2001-01 and quick passage out of the Committee. We hope too that the other vital needs, referenced above, become a priority as this current session of the Oregon Legislature continues.

Respectfully,



Jiminy Jones
Executive Director