



February 9, 2022

House Committee on Housing
Oregon Legislature
900 Court Street, NE
Salem, OR 97301

Chair Fahey, Vice Chairs Morgan and Campos, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Jimmy Jones and I am the Executive Director of the Mid-Willamette Valley Community Action Agency here in Salem, where we serve people in poverty in Marion and Polk Counties, as well as nine other Oregon counties in some programs. Across the Agency we serve more than 50,000 low-income Oregonians each year. I am also the Chair of the Legislative Committee of the Community Action Partnership of Oregon, which for nearly 40 years has been Oregon's delivery system for homeless, housing, energy, weatherization and other anti-poverty programs. Our agency operates the ARCHES Project here in Salem, which is one of the most well-known and innovative homeless service models in Oregon, and includes our Project Turnkey Motel, the ARCHES Inn.

I write today in support of House Bill 4037-1; which will assist our local government in its effort to acquire more space for micro-sheltering, and other forms of sheltering and housing projects that may be viable on unused state-owned land in our city. I have lived in Salem for 15 years and worked on the homeless issue here for the past seven years. For most of us, Salem remains a small town. But over the last decade we have a big city homeless crisis, one that grows worse every year despite dedicated local government efforts in collaboration with the provider community. All of us have worked very hard to provide new sheltering opportunities for our large unsheltered community, but we struggle every day with the same problem: a lack of viable properties.

We have, as a community, made a great deal of progress on the homeless issue the past five years. We have leveraged our partnerships, collaborated on a level beyond anything we have done before. The City has one of the most innovative permanent supportive housing projects in Oregon, led by the Salem Housing Authority. We have opened new shelters, including a new Union Gospel Mission, the ARCHES Inn, Tanner Project (a transitional veteran sheltering project), Taylor's House (an RHY project), Safe Sleep (a shelter for high needs unsheltered women) and much more to complement our long existing services. We have expanded our warming network, and increased our bed nights in winter for emergency sheltering from around 800 five years ago to more than 16,000 last winter. We've formed our own local Continuum of Care and soon we will deploy our new Navigation Center. Every month we add new resources in service of our efforts in this crisis. All that, and still we need more.

The City has bravely embraced micro-sheltering, which would have been very controversial just a few years ago. But we struggle to find good locations to site these projects, among locations for other project types as well. House Bill 4037-1 gives the city another tool to fight our unsheltered crisis here in Salem, and it gives us a pathway to help people move from unsheltered conditions to our growing low-barrier shelter stock. I urge you to give this measure your due consideration and support House Bill 4037.

Respectfully,

Jimmy Jones
Executive Director