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**To: House Committee on Housing**  
**From: Sybil Hebb, Oregon Law Center**  
**Date: February 9<sup>th</sup>, 2022**  
**Re: HB 4037**

Chair Fahey, Vice-Chairs Campos and Morgan, and members of the committee:

On behalf of the Oregon Law Center, I am pleased to submit this written testimony in support of HB 4037. This bill would help people experiencing homelessness in the Salem area by providing the City with a critical tool to expand temporary or emergency sheltering in the community. We thank the bill sponsors for their leadership in bringing this bill forward.

The Oregon Law Center (OLC) is a state-wide non-profit law firm whose mission is to achieve justice for low-income communities of Oregon by providing a full range of the highest quality civil legal services. Helping families maintain safe, stable housing is a critical part of our work. Housing is about much more than a roof over one's head; it is about opportunity, stability, and health. Without stable housing, it is difficult or impossible for families to hold down a job, keep children in school, access neighborhood amenities, and stay healthy.

The majority of our client community is rent burdened – one emergency away from homelessness – or are houseless themselves, living either doubled-up or in shelter, or living outside without adequate shelter. The experience of homelessness has well-documented long-term consequences on health and well-being. Rates of homelessness pose great challenges for Oregon, and these challenges appear poised to grow, as state rents are rising, vacancies are low, and communities across the state struggle to respond with compassion and efficacy to some of the highest rates of unsheltered homelessness in the nation.

HB 4037 is one step forward in supporting our statewide efforts to provide more options and greater security for people experiencing homelessness. The bill will assist the local government in finding space for micro-sheltering and other forms of emergency housing. Access to shelter is a matter of life-and death, and passage of this bill will help save lives in the local area.

HB 4037 will help to mitigate the struggles for the many Oregonians in the Salem area who have no other option but to sleep and try to survive living outside. On behalf of our clients experiencing and at risk of homelessness across the state, we urge support for this bill which will help set an example for other communities.

Thank you for your work and for your commitment to Oregonians.