



HOUSING ALLIANCE

February 9, 2022

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

Dear Chair Fahey, Vice Chair Morgan, Vice Chair Campos, Members of the Committee:

I am writing to you today on behalf of the Oregon Housing Alliance to express our support for HB 4123, which creates a pilot program for eight communities across Oregon to coordinate between cities and counties to address homelessness.

The Oregon Housing Alliance is a coalition of more than ninety organizations from all parts of the state. Our members have come together with the knowledge that housing opportunity is the foundation on which all success is built – individual success as students, parents, workers, and community members as well as the success of our communities. We represent a diverse set of voices including affordable housing developers, residents of affordable housing, local jurisdictions, and organizations working to meet basic needs in every corner of our state.

We believe that all Oregonians need a safe, stable, and affordable place to call home.

Unfortunately, Oregon also has one of the highest rates of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness, meaning they are sleeping outside, in a tent, or a car. In 2019, Oregon Housing and Community Services commissioned a study of shelter¹ in our state, and found that Oregon is one of four states where more than half of people (61%) experiencing homelessness don't have access to shelter, meaning they are literally sleeping on the street, in a car or in a tent. This high rate is directly due to the lack of availability of shelter in our community. In addition, some people seeking shelter are unable to access it due to barriers in shelter – they cannot stay with their partner or their pet because of shelter capacity or policy.

It is important to note that people of color disproportionately experience homelessness and housing instability due to historic and systemic discrimination in housing and employment, and many other factors. People experiencing unsheltered homelessness are disproportionately people of color, compared to their percentage of the general population. In Oregon, the 2019 Point in Time count² showed that while Black Oregonians make up 1.9% of the general population, they make up 6% of people experiencing homelessness who were counted in 2019.

People experiencing homelessness are our neighbors and members of our community.

¹ <https://www.oregon.gov/ohcs/ISD/RA/Oregon-Statewide-Shelter-Study.pdf>

² <https://public.tableau.com/profile/oregon.housing.and.community.services#!/vizhome/2019Point-in-TimeDashboard/Story1>

HB 4123 will support eight communities across Oregon to better coordinate, work together, plan, and address homelessness. This unique approach will include cities, counties, and local homeless service providers.

Currently, many local jurisdictions lack the staff capacity needed to address homelessness. HB 4123 would fund eight sites to pilot this work, with a requirement that the cities and counties included would be able to continue funding the work after the pilot was concluded. HB 4123 will increase the capacity of local governments to work together to address homelessness. Cities and counties who have asked to be included in HB 4123 are making commitments to:

- Sign an inter-governmental agreement with regional partners to manage and facilitate the coordinated homeless response office;
- Establish an oversight board, consisting of members from each participating local government;
- Develop a 5-year strategic plan to identify gaps in their community's homeless services including identifying funding to support ongoing coordination, in collaboration with community partners and existing efforts;
- Commit to continued, sustained funding beyond the first 2 years of state funding;
- Work to incorporate best practices for ending homelessness, and eliminate racial disparities within their homeless service system; and
- Report back to the legislature and OHCS on local progress, opportunities, and challenges to inform future state homeless funding and policy decisions.

These are all critical efforts for local governments to take in order to address our challenges as a community.

The efforts must also include not only affordable housing providers and homeless service providers, but the efforts must include people who have lived experience with homelessness. People who have experienced homelessness have a unique perspective as to how to fix the systems and structures that both allow homelessness to occur, and how to support people to exit homelessness. Their voices are critical to these discussions.

We know that ending homelessness is possible. To truly end homelessness in our communities, we must have enough housing that is affordable to people with low incomes in our communities, along with strong systems to provide rent assistance, legal supports, and emergency shelter when needed. We have significant work to do to build that system in Oregon. Alone, HB 4123 will not solve these problems, but without local government commitment to solving these challenges, and coordination among cities, counties, and service providers, we cannot do the important work ahead.

We strongly urge your support for HB 4123.

Thank you very much for your time, and for your service to our state.

Sincerely,



Alison McIntosh
On Behalf of the Oregon Housing Alliance

Housing Alliance Members

1000 Friends of Oregon
211info
Aging in the Gorge
Benton Habitat for Humanity
Bienestar
Bradley Angle
BRIDGE Housing
Business for a Better Portland
CASA of Oregon
Cascade AIDS Project
Central City Concern
Chrisman Development
Church Women United of Lane County
City of Beaverton
City of Eugene
City of Forest Grove
City of Hillsboro
City of Hood River
City of Portland
City of Tigard
Clackamas County
Coalition of Community Health Clinics
Coalition of Housing Advocates
College Housing Northwest
Community Action Partnership of Oregon
Community Action Team
Community Action Program of East Central Oregon
(CAPECO)
Community Alliance of Tenants
Community Development Partners
Community Housing Fund
Community Partners for Affordable Housing
Community Services Consortium
Community Vision
Cornerstone Community Housing
DevNW
Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon
Enterprise Community Partners
Fair Housing Council of Oregon
Farmworker Housing Development Corp.
FOOD for Lane County
Habitat for Humanity of Oregon
Habitat for Humanity Portland/Metro East
Hacienda CDC
Home Forward
Homes for Good
Horizon Project, Inc.
Housing Authorities of Oregon
Housing Authority of Clackamas County
Housing Development Center
Housing Oregon
Human Solutions
Immigrant & Refugee Community Organization
Innovative Housing, Inc.
Interfaith Alliance on Poverty
JOIN
Lane County Health and Human Services
League of Oregon Cities
League of Women Voters of Oregon
Lincoln County
Looking Glass Community Services
Mainstream Housing Inc.
Metro
Mercy Housing Northwest
Mid-Columbia Housing Authority
Mid-Willamette Valley Community Action Agency
NAYA Family Center
Neighborhood Partnerships
NeighborImpact
NeighborWorks Umpqua
Network for Oregon Affordable Housing
Northwest Housing Alternatives
Northwest Pilot Project
Oregon AFSCME Council 75
Oregon Coalition of Christian Voices
Oregon Center for Public Policy
Oregon Coalition on Housing & Homelessness
Oregon Consumer Justice
Oregon Council on Developmental Disabilities
Oregon Food Bank
Our Children Oregon
Partners for a Hunger-Free Oregon
Portland Community College
Portland Community Reinvestment Initiatives
Portland Housing Center
Portland Homeless Family Solutions
Portland: Neighbors Welcome
Proud Ground
Raphael House
REACH CDC
Residents Organizing for Change (ROC Oregon)
Rogue Action Center
Rose CDC
St. Francis Shelter
St. Vincent de Paul of Lane County, Inc.
ShelterCare
Sisters Habitat for Humanity
Sponsors, Inc.
Springfield Eugene Tenant Association (SETA)
SquareOne Villages
Street Roots
Think Real Estate
Transition Projects
Washington County
Welcome Home Coalition
West Tuality Habitat for Humanity
Wishcamper Development Partners