



27 March 2025

Joint Subcommittee on Transportation and Economic Development
Oregon State Legislature

Co-Chair Woods, Co-Chair Gomberg, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Jimmy Jones, and I am the Executive Director of the **Mid-Willamette Valley Community Action Agency** in Salem. We serve low-income residents of Marion, Polk, and nine other counties across Oregon. Annually, we provide more than \$80 million in services and direct client assistance for housing, homelessness, energy and weatherization, and early learning programs to more than 60,000 Oregonians in poverty. I also serve as the Vice President for Legislative Affairs at the Community Action Partnership of Oregon, sit on the Housing Committee of the Racial Justice Council, and previously was a member of the House Bill 2100 Task Force on Homelessness and Racial Disparities, and recently Chaired the Legislature's Joint Task Force on Hospital Discharge. Our Agency operates seven adult and youth homeless shelters, including two 75-room project turnkey motels (the **ARCHES Inn** and **ARCHES Lodge**) and the **MWVCAA Navigation Center**.

We write today in support of SB 5011, which includes funding for Oregon Housing and Community Services, and the Governor's and Legislature's housing and sheltering priorities. In specific, our Agency supports the entire OHCS Budget bill, but in particular we would like to call your attention to two specific needs.

Policy Option Package 504/505 – Eviction Prevention. We have made enormous strides in Oregon, under the leadership of Governor Kotek and the Oregon Legislature, in addressing both the current acute crisis of unsheltered homelessness and the long-term necessity of promoting the stability of low-income households, so that they do not become the feeder system for the next generation of homelessness. That relationship is poorly understood, because we tend to believe that homelessness is the product of personal conduct. In fact, homelessness is almost always the consequence of economic events; thus, preventing the creation of new homeless households must be a part of solving the current generation of needs. Today's eviction crisis is tomorrow's chronically homeless tragedy on our streets. We support the investment \$172 million in the state's prevention efforts, which will keep thousands of Oregonians in their homes in the two years ahead. More than 2,000 low-income, endangered Oregon families face eviction each month. We can stop those families from becoming tomorrow's chronically homeless, unsheltered residents of our cities.

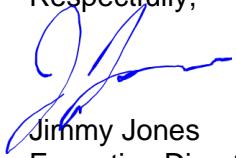
Policy Option Package 501 – Maintaining Shelter Operations. The first step in combating our unsheltered crisis is to protect previous investments in shelter expansion, and continue to reduce the percentages of unsheltered among our homeless population. Oregon has consistently scored in the top three among most unsheltered states in the nation. As recently as eight years ago, we were investing only about \$7 million a year statewide into state sponsored sheltering, which was grossly inadequate for the size, scope, and needs of the state's housing crisis. Instead we relied on private charity models for our shelter system, which were typically high barrier and expressly unsuited for the problem the state hopes to solve. The \$217 million proposed investment will prevent the loss of over 4,800 currently funded state shelter beds. But for that assistance, we will see a dramatic increase the numbers of folks on the street in every corner of Oregon. These efforts have been successful to date, as Oregon saw roughly 100

fewer homeless deaths (even in the middle of an opioid epidemic) in 2024, than in 2023. Most of our cities have seen a considerable visible decline in street homelessness as well, over 2020 and 2021. What we are doing is working. Let's preserve our capacity.

Oregon has made great progress since 2020, through collaborative work and community partnerships. We have built adequate statewide infrastructure through Project Turnkey, Navigation Centers, the Emergency Order shelter and housing expansion, and the great work that has taken place here in the People's Body for the past five years. Let's protect what we have won, and finish the job.

For all of these reasons, we urge your strong support of House Bill 5011. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony and for your service to Oregon communities.

Respectfully,



Jimmy Jones
Executive Director