

February 26, 2025

TO: Chair Marsh and members of the House Committee On Housing & Homelessness

FROM: Association of Oregon Counties Legislative Affairs Manager, Jessica Pratt
RE: Support HB 3644 with amendments

Dear Chair Marsh and members of the committee,

On behalf of the Association of Oregon Counties, representing Oregon's county governments, I am writing in support of House Bill 3644 with two small but critical amendments. HB 3644 codifies the local coordinated homelessness response infrastructure created under HB 4123 (2021), the Governor's executive order on the state of emergency due to unsheltered homelessness and HB 2001 and HB 5019 in 2023.,.

This unprecedented partnership between state and local governments brought cities and counties together with their local homeless services partners and equipped these regional groups with flexible funding to plan and respond to the unique needs and challenges of their people and geographies.

Crucially, cities and counties collaborated with the Oregon Housing and Community Services department to determine the most functional boundaries for the regional Local Planning Groups and these local governments designated the regional coordinator collaboratively with their homeless services partners.

We are grateful for the Governor's office, Representative Marsh and the members of the Sustainable Shelter Work Group bringing this bill forward and offer the following friendly amendments to ensure that we build on the state's previous investment in the local coordination infrastructure built over these last two years:

- 1) Remove the 24/7 requirement in the base bill. Shelter funding currently supports nightly pop-up severe weather/poor air quality shelters, which would not be allowable with the current language and are a life-saving emergency response tool.
- 2) Ensure that regional boundaries and regional coordinators are determined collaboratively with local governments to align with and maximize existing health and human services capacity and infrastructure.

HB 3644, with these suggested amendments, will increase the return on investment in Oregon's statewide shelter and rehousing system by building on the effective pathways from homelessness to permanent housing already laid by the hard work of community members, shelter and housing professionals and local governments.

Especially as the bill increases the work of regional coordinators, it is also important to note 1) the need for flexible funding for local coordination activities including coordination and implementation of annual Point-In-Time counts, community outreach and engagement to address service gaps, best practices for coordinated entry, and grant prospecting, writing and administration; and 2) the need for a funding floor that at least maintains current capacity.

We look forward to continuing this conversation with you and thank you for partnering with AOC and counties to serve all of Oregon.

Jessica Pratt
Legislative Affairs Manager
Association of Oregon Counties