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**House Committee on Housing and Homelessness
Testimony in Support of HB 3644
2/26/2025**

Chair Marsh, Vice-Chairs Anderson and Breese-Iverson, and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Oregon Law Center, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of HB 3644, which implements the statewide shelter system for Oregonians who have been forced to live outside. We thank Governor Kotek, Matthew Tschabold, and Chair Marsh for their leadership in ensuring comprehensive, sustainable solutions to our growing housing crisis.

OLC's 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. Without stable housing, it is difficult or impossible to hold down a job, keep children in school, access neighborhood amenities, and stay healthy. As vacancy rates have plummeted and housing has become less and less affordable across the state, our clients have increasingly struggled to maintain stability for themselves and their children. Increasingly, our clients have been forced to live outside due to the severe shortage of affordable housing supply.

Through Governor Kotek's emergency response addressing unsheltered homelessness, and through partnership with the Legislature to fund increased shelter, rehousing, and prevention services, Oregon is projected to support over 4,800 shelter beds, rehouse 3,300 households, and prevent another 24,000 households from experiencing homelessness by June 30, 2025.

HB 3644 will provide greater stability to our response to homelessness, by transitioning the state away from one-time emergency response funding towards an ongoing and outcomes-based shelter and rehousing program. The bill is designed to align with recognized best practices in shelter and service delivery, and will ensure that our systems continue to support people experiencing homelessness accessing the services they need to transition into permanent housing.

I would like to specifically note and appreciate the bill's inclusion of day center service providers in the list of partners invited to coordinate local regional planning. These providers are a critical part of the safety and services net for people experiencing homelessness, and are often the closest thing to home for many people. These providers have valuable insight and perspective that will contribute to effective planning and response. We hope that these providers will be eligible for re-housing funding assistance in that budget package when it comes out.



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OLC would also note that the stability and sustainability of a comprehensive shelter network is particularly important to our clients who have experienced domestic or sexual violence. Gender-based violence is a leading cause of homelessness in Oregon, and once forced into homelessness, people experience higher rates of sexual violence. A [recent report found](#) that 67% of people experiencing homelessness in the Pacific Northwest said domestic violence caused homelessness at some point in their lives, and 49% said it caused their current situation. HB 3644 will stabilize supports for victims fleeing violence.

HB 3644 is designed to support regional coordination, allowing communities the flexibility to design solutions tailored to their unique needs. Statewide coordination will ensure standards that adhere to best practices. We hope that those best practices will ensure that community members with lived experience of homelessness (see Section 1(1)(a)), in addition to the general public (see (Section 2(4)(b))), will have the opportunity to provide input into the development of regional plans, and we hope that shelters receiving funding must offer beds and/or services that are “voluntary” in keeping with best practices (see Section 1(4)) as recognized in the 2019 [OHCS Statewide Shelter Study](#) report. As the discussion moves forward, we hope to see these aspects codified in statute or rule.

We thank the Governor, Matt Tschabold, Chair Marsh, and all the Shelter Framework Workgroup members for their work to craft HB 3644. With passage of this bill, our state will transition from addressing homelessness through scattered emergency responses, to developing and refining a regionally coordinated shelter and rehousing system.

For the above reasons, we urge your strong support.

Thank you for your time and consideration.