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To: House Human Services Committee
From: Oregon Law Center
Date: February 24th, 2021
Re: Support for HB 3026

Chair Williams, Vice-Chairs Leif and Ruiz, and members of the committee:

On behalf of the Oregon Law Center, I submit this testimony in support of HB 3026, which would improve access to state identification cards for Oregonians experiencing homelessness. We thank the committee and the bill's sponsors for bringing this important measure forward.

The Oregon Law Center (OLC) is a statewide 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. OLC uses its limited resources to serve only the most critical legal needs—food, shelter, basic medical care, physical safety, and self-sufficiency. By ensuring access to justice for our clients in these areas, we can remove barriers to escaping poverty.

A significant percentage of our client community is one emergency away from homelessness – or are houseless themselves, living either doubled-up or in shelter, or living outside without adequate shelter. The pandemic has exacerbated this situation, and currently more than half of Oregon’s population experiencing homelessness is unsheltered, exposed to the elements and myriad public health and safety crises. It is important to note that BIPOC communities, as a result of long-standing systemic racism, are more likely to suffer homelessness than other Oregonians.¹

State identification cards are a necessity as a means of documenting identity for access to many shelter and other social services. Often, people experiencing homelessness are unable to maintain their belongings in security, and these cards frequently get lost and need to be replaced. There are fees to obtain these cards, and replacement cards, which while nominal for many of us, can be prohibitive for people experiencing homelessness.

HB 3026 removes a prohibitive barrier to obtain identification for people who are living without a stable home. Passage of this bill will facilitate ease of access to critical services than can foster stability, support, and safety for our neighbors who are experiencing homelessness. For these reasons, we urge support of HB 3026.

Thank you for your commitment to Oregonians.

¹ <https://www.streetroots.org/news/2020/12/02/opinion-what-do-people-experiencing-homelessness-need>