

Hood River Shelter Services Supports HB 2006

April 13, 2021

Good morning Chair Jama and members of the Senate Committee on Housing and Development,

My name is Sarah Kellems and I am the Director of Hood River Shelter Services. I am writing to express support for House Bill 2006. Thank you for the opportunity to share my story.

For the past eleven years, Hood River Shelter Services has operated a winter Warming Shelter in Hood River County. Our program provides the only emergency shelter option in the County. This past winter, we served 89 individuals and served an average of 13 people per night.

Hood River Shelter Services has never had a stable, long-term location. In the early years, our program moved every week, which was stressful and exhausting. For the past three winters, shelter services were housed in a room rented in a local church; this room had six bunk beds with overflow space for sleeping in the church hallways. We used those overflow spaces every single night. Once COVID hit it was clear this location could not continue to be viable.

Last summer, we learned about “non-congregate” shelter, which limits shared breathing space to reduce exposure to and transmission of the virus. We moved forward with a non-congregate model, and were granted CARES funds from The City of Hood River and Hood River County to purchase emergency shelter units from Pallet Shelter.

We explored over a dozen public and privately-owned sites and finally secured this past winter’s location at the eleventh hour. Our application was submitted literally on the final day of the emergency siting window last September. Without it, the shelter would not have opened this winter.

This past winter’s location in the parking lot of Hood River Valley Christian Church was for a one-year agreement only. Without flexible siting, a location for next winter may not be possible.

We are extremely excited about House Bill 2006. If this bill passes, it will have a significant, positive, and stabilizing impact not only for our organization but for ongoing homeless services here in Hood River County and throughout our state.

Thank you for your time and your service,

Sarah Kellems
Director, Hood River Shelter Services



Photo Description: Hood River Shelter Services Non-Congregate Shelter Site, Hood River Valley Christian Church, January 2021

Photo Credit: HRSS Staff