

February 24, 2025

House Housing and Homelessness Committee Members,

As an advocate for people experiencing homelessness, I urge you to give HB 3644 your full support to help maintain the critical shelter system in Lane County. Our community has one of the highest per-capita rates of homelessness in the country with more than 3,500 people living without shelter.

In response to this crisis, local organizations, service providers, and advocates have collaborated to expand shelter options to meet the needs of those experiencing homelessness. These shelters range from group drop-in shelters to vehicle sites, indoor spaces with individual tents, and "village-style" models. These sites remain in high demand, with long waitlists, demonstrating both their necessity and success in providing stable shelter environments.

One organization that has been instrumental in addressing homelessness is Community Supported Shelters. Their innovative and humane approach to transitional shelter has helped many individuals find stability. However, despite historic state investments in shelters over the past two years, around 250 innovative and effective shelter spaces in Eugene, including those operated by Community Supported Shelters, do not qualify for the state support necessary to keep them open.

The Sustainable Shelter Workgroup's recommendation for the Safe Temporary Emergency Placement (STEP) program, included within HB 3644, would address this gap by allowing vehicle and alternative sites to become eligible for state funding. Our community has stepped up to respond to the homelessness crisis, leveraging one-time local, state, and federal funds to create a network of shelters in collaboration with social service providers. We need the state's continued partnership and leadership to sustain and expand these efforts. We have made tremendous progress, but more support is needed.

Please give HB 3644 your full support to ensure that safe and effective shelter options, including those provided by Community Supported Shelters, remain available for those who need them.

Sincerely,
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