

Eugene Shelter Consortium Legislative Testimony

February 24, 2025

House Housing and Homelessness Committee Members,

As members of the Eugene Shelter Consortium, we encourage 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 – averaging more than 3,500 people experiencing homelessness in a city of 178,000 people with only about 1,000 shelter spaces available. That leaves approximately 2,400 people sleeping in doorways, in parks, under highway overpasses and along the river in places not fit for human habitation every night in our community.

We are creating communitywide solutions. The Eugene Shelter Consortium is a collaborative effort to improve care coordination and outcomes for people experiencing homelessness in the Eugene area and to create a more cooperative and efficient approach among Eugene's shelter providers. The Consortium includes the City of Eugene, Community Supported Shelters, Everyone Village, SquareOne Villages, Nightingale Hosted Shelters and Carry It Forward. Together, we account for about one third of the local shelter capacity.

As a shelter consortium, we experience firsthand the impact that having more shelter in our community has had on saving lives. As we work together to continue to help people stabilize and transition to long-term housing, sustained state funding and support is critical to our efforts.

Our community has stepped up to respond to the homelessness crisis by investing one-time local, state and federal funds in creating a unique, collaborative network of shelters with social service providers. The diverse range of shelters include group drop-in shelters, vehicle sites, indoor space with individual tents, and "village style" models. The sites are in high demand and remain filled with long waitlists. Our Consortium sees value in providing a diverse range of shelter types to meet the needs of all of our community members that are lacking shelter.

Consortium supported shelters were developed collaboratively with service provider input and with the input of people with lived experience. They provide safe and supported spaces for people to stay and develop healthy relationships with staff, fellow occupants, and other service providers and access the resources and services needed on the path to permanent housing.

Even with historic state investments in shelters over the past two years, around 250 of the innovative and successful shelter spaces in Eugene don't qualify for the state support needed to keep them open. Therefore, we strongly support the Sustainable Shelter Workgroup's recommendation for the Safe Temporary Emergency Placement sites, or STEP program that is included within HB 3644 and would allow vehicle and alternative sites to become eligible for state funding. We also advocate increasing the current proposed funding level so that STEP program sites have the resources needed to sustain them.

We have made tremendous progress in our community. We ask for the state's continued leadership and partnership in this crisis. Please give HB 3644 your full support.

Respectfully,

