



Mayor Keith Wilson

March 11, 2025

House Committee on Behavioral Health and Health Care
900 Court Street NE, HR C
Salem, OR 97301

Chair Nosse, Vice Chairs Nelson and Javadi, and Members of the Committee,

Oregon is deep in a housing and homelessness crisis with an estimated 16,000 individuals living unsheltered across the state. This is a humanitarian issue that transcends political boundaries, party affiliations, and geographic divisions, requiring a coordinated, multi-jurisdictional response. The persistence of widespread unsheltered homelessness is unacceptable. These are members of our communities. Addressing their needs with urgency and compassion is both a moral and policy imperative.

It is for this reason that I strongly support HB 3146, which would establish a pilot program aimed at providing low-barrier emergency housing for individuals experiencing homelessness while they await placement in residential substance use disorder treatment or withdrawal management programming.

Oregon needs an on-demand behavioral health system where people who are ready for treatment can access the care they need right away. Without such a system in place, people with substance use disorder are forced to wait for residential treatment or withdrawal management service to become available. This can be particularly dangerous for people experiencing homelessness. Without immediate access to shelter at the critical moment when they seek support, they are often forced to remain in unstable living conditions. Additionally, the inability to locate individuals on waitlists results in missed treatment opportunities, creating bottlenecks that reduce overall system efficiency. By bridging this gap, this pilot program seeks to enhance accessibility, improve outcomes, and streamline the transition into treatment and recovery.

In Portland, the city set out to solve a similar problem through our Temporary Alternative Shelter Sites (TASS), which offer a compassionate, service-oriented model informed by individuals with lived experience. The TASS provide low-barrier shelter where people experiencing homelessness can access a suite of resources including housing assistance, mental health support, substance use disorder treatment, and other essential resources facilitated by nonprofit and county partners. By providing individuals with a safe, hygienic place to stabilize and get the necessary documents in order, we are able to immediately facilitate the transition to treatment or withdrawal management as soon as a resource becomes available. These kinds of initiatives are so important to helping people suffering from substance use disorder who are ready for treatment to get on a pathway toward stability and transition out of unsheltered homelessness.

This legislation represents an important piece of the continuum of care that we need to help individuals experiencing homelessness in Oregon find a path to stability and long-term recovery. I urge your support of House Bill 3146.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Keith D. Wilson".

Mayor Keith Wilson