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SAN FRANCISCO PORTLAND

MWA Architects calls on the Legislature to invest significantly in housing and homelessness prevention through SB 1530.

For over 35 years, MWA Architects has focused on design and renovation projects with organizations dedicated to providing homes for our most vulnerable citizens. We have seen the successes and challenges of these efforts and understand that the journey from houselessness to being housed is not the same for everyone. There are different support structures needed in that transition, and the first step can often be shelter and transitional housing programs. We are committed as an organization to help by lending our expertise to plan smartly and economically for the built environment that is necessary. We have seen the positive effects that the infusion of funding for affordable housing has had, and a similar effort needs to be made to help those not yet able to move into a permanent home.

Housing Oregon, Governor Kotek, and the Oregon Housing and Community Services (OHCS) are advocating for a vital investment of \$65 million in Oregon's homeless shelters and transitional housing system. This funding is essential to stabilize our existing shelter capacity and enhance the outcomes of our shelter system. It includes crucial support for services like housing navigation and assistance with obtaining identification, which are critical steps in transitioning individuals from shelters to permanent housing.

With only one year-round emergency shelter bed for every three individuals experiencing homelessness in Oregon, the need for stable, ongoing funding cannot be overstated. Such funding would allow providers to concentrate more on delivering crucial services and less on financial survival.

Furthermore, ensuring that shelters remain open and operational is not just a matter of addressing homelessness; it is also an issue of racial and geographic equity. Disproportionate rates of homelessness among Black, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, and American Indian or Alaskan Native Oregonians highlight the racial disparities that need to be addressed. Moreover, nearly 40% of shelters at risk of closure are located in the Balance of State CoC, underscoring the statewide impact of this issue.

The request for \$65 million is a necessary step towards a more equitable and just Oregon. I urge you to consider this request with the seriousness and urgency it deserves, recognizing that it is not just a financial decision but a moral imperative.

Thank you for your dedication to serving the people of Oregon.

Bill Lanning, AIA
Vice President