

CHURCH @ THE PARK

a t a b l e o f l o v e a n d a c c e p t a n c e

2111 FRONT ST NE STE 1-103 | SALEM, OREGON 97301

February 13th, 2024

Church at The Park (C@P) calls on the Legislature to make significant investments in housing and homelessness prevention through SB 1530.

C@P has been creating a table of love and acceptance for those who need it most and empowering people to change their lives and exit poverty by providing shelter, workforce development, and tangible resources since 2007. C@P operates in Marion and Polk Counties providing housing-focused shelter, workforce development, and relationship-based resource navigation. In 2023, C@P provided emergency shelter to 503 unsheltered adults, families, and young adults. C@P currently provides sheltering at three separate sites, one for families, one for young adults, and one for adults. We are in the process of opening a fourth shelter site in Dallas for residents of rural Polk County. Additionally, we provide shelter for people living in their vehicles through our Safe Parking program.

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 key 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. It is an investment in the basic human dignity of providing shelter to those in need. 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. We would be honored to host you for a tour of our shelters, as we believe that centering the needs and stories of our unsheltered Oregonians will result in policies and legislation that will increase belonging across the State of Oregon.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "DJV".

DJ Vincent, Founding Pastor & CEO
Church at the Park
503-949-2124
dj@church-at-the-park.org