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I would like to thank the Chair and Senators on this committee for today's public hearing, and the opportunity to testify in support of this bill. Veterans' services are a commitment shared across the State of Oregon, and I believe that this bill will enhance our ability to support our veterans who are most in need.

We expect that the short term exemption provided in House Bill 2691A will be especially valuable during Veteran Stand Down events. These stand downs provide critical resources to many of the most vulnerable veterans in our community, including medical and dental services, legal support, clothing, a chance to meet with county veteran service officers, access to businesses hiring veterans, and information about many of the local nonprofits and community programs that can help. At each Stand Down that I have attended, the medical and dental services have been perhaps the most valued and utilized services available.

For example, at the Portland Stand Down and Job Fair last fall, led by Central City Concern, there were a total of 625 veterans who came to get help during one of the event's two days. Later that month Multnomah County helped organize the East County Stand Down with 176 veterans. Clackamas County's Stand Down helped about 125 veterans. Each of these important events, which are scheduled throughout the state, are largely made possible by the efforts of volunteers.

In 2012, Senate Bill 1509 enabled dentists and dental hygienists licensed in another state to practice in Oregon without compensation for no more than five days in any 12 month period. House Bill 2691 is modeled after this legislation, and will enable nurses to come to Oregon as volunteers to participate in Stand Downs and other events that help homeless veterans.

I believe that we have a collective responsibility to support our service men and women, and do everything we can to ensure stability and happiness for all of our veterans. Thank you for your time, and I hope that you support this legislation.

Sincerely,

Diane McKeel
Multnomah County Commissioner, District 4