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Testimony of John Mullin, (503) 867-6236
General Assistance HB 2194
House Human Services and Housing Committee
March 4, 2015

Madam Chair, members Committee, for the record, my name is John Mullin and I am a Legislative Advocate for the Oregon Law Center. I am here today to testify in favor of HB 2194.

On OLIS today you will see our General Assistance (GA) Coalition's one-pager, and you will note the strong support from numerous organizations for creating a pilot project to serve about 200 homeless people, currently in the Department of Human Services system. We have worked with your staff to submit the following conceptual amendments to HB 2194:

The first one describes the pilot itself:

The General Assistance pilot would consist of identifying consumers of the Oregon Health Plan who have been determined to have a disability by the Department of Human Services (DHS) Presumptive Medicaid Disability Determination Team (PMDDT), and who are identified by the Department of Human Services as homeless. DHS staff will contact these consumers, offering housing assistance and personal incidental funds, and assisting consumers to apply for, and secure federal Social Security Administration disability benefits. The program will be capped at a maximum monthly average of 200 cases. A representative stakeholder group will work with DHS to establish program metrics, and an independent evaluation of the pilot program results will be commissioned by DHS.

The second amendment has to do with estate recovery. That's where the state goes in and collects back assistance payments from clients after they die. This population is very poor, and is unlikely the state would collect anything significant. Amending estate recovery out for purpose of the pilot would also avoid some administrative costs for DHS. For further information on GA Estate Recovery, see ORS 411.795:

<http://www.oregonlaws.org/ors/411.795>

In conclusion, I would just say that the advisory committee for the General Assistance study looked at a number of different options for a pilot project. Our GA Steering Committee concluded that the approach, as outlined in the conceptual amendment, builds on the existing staffing within DHS, utilizes a “housing first” model that has worked in Utah and elsewhere, and prioritizes a very vulnerable subset of those who are potentially eligible for Social Security disability benefits. I very much support the basic bill and the conceptual amendments that would implement this critical pilot project.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on HB 2194. I would be happy to respond to any questions.