



May 7, 2015

To: Chair Sara Gelser and members of the Senate Committee on  
Human Services and Early Childhood  
Fr: Mary Carroll, Senior Policy Advisor to Multnomah County Chair  
Deborah Kafoury  
Re: Support of HB 2195

Chair Gelser and members of the Committee, thank you for allowing me to testify in support of HB 2195, which will allow Multnomah County to dedicate funds from the sale of tax-foreclosed houses to respond to the needs of homeless youth and families with children.

For the record, my name is Mary Carroll and I am here today on behalf of Multnomah County in my role as Senior Policy Advisor on Housing and Homelessness for Chair Deborah Kafoury.

During the 2013-2014 academic year, 2,985 students in Multnomah County public schools (4.1 percent) reported being homeless, well above the statewide average (3.35%). This problem presents multiple challenges for school districts, social service providers, public safety officials and others, and requires new resources to adequately address.

Last year, our community formally adopted a shared governance structure called *A Home for Everyone*, to coordinate public and private investments and policies to respond to the crisis of homelessness in Multnomah County. The crisis is well documented: over 1,800 people are unsheltered each night in our community.

The cities of Portland and Gresham, Home Forward, Meyer Memorial Trust and Multnomah County are working together on a coordinated, well-defined

approach of focusing our resources on priority populations to achieve our community goals.

In January, the Committee adopted an ambitious community plan which sets two measurable goals: End all veteran homelessness by the end of 2015 and reduce the unmet need of those experiencing homelessness by 50% within two years. We have prioritized vulnerable populations, which includes homeless youth, families with children and veterans.

Mayor's Hales and Chair Kafoury have just released their budgets which dedicate significant new resources to our shared goal of housing 600 homeless veterans in the next seven months and increasing our housing placement from 3000 per year to 4000 people per year for the next two years.

We support HB 2195 so that our county can use funds from the sale of foreclosed properties to invest in our community's plan and to increase flexible rent assistance and retention activities to move youth and families into housing and provide the supports to keep them housed. We will also create more affordable units for these very low income priority populations, which will help alleviate the severe shortage of available housing units that we see in our community. Our biggest challenge in moving people into housing are rising rents and a miniscule 1% vacancy rate for affordable units in our community.

**We believe that investing these funds in a strategic and coordinated plan to address the crisis of homelessness is the highest and best use of these public funds. We are pleased that this bill has the support of the largest taxing districts, the cities of Portland and Gresham and Portland Public Schools, and has received no opposition.**

These investments will be closely monitored and evaluated to assess our progress and report outcomes to the community.

Thank you for allowing me to provide this testimony.