

Dear Legislators:

Homelessness is becoming ever more common here in Lane County. With the cost of living higher than it has ever been, we're seeing our fellow Lane county residents and neighbors, some of whom live with devastating and debilitating disabilities, struggling to provide for their basic needs. These needs can include basic things that many people take for granted like physical and emotional health, intellectual capacity, access to employment, housing, appropriate and effective mental health services.

As you already know, many Oregon families are only one paycheck away from financial insecurity. But when a family is impacted by a mental or physical health issues, intellectual disability, generational poverty, or addiction..... on top of stigma and discrimination the picture begins to change. People with these types of disabilities are much more likely to be victims of violent crime, suffer poor nutrition, be incarcerated, have mortality rates which vastly outnumber the general population, and are more susceptible to homelessness.

I encourage you to be courageous and demonstrate common decency in partnering with local communities, leaders and systems to abolish homelessness in Oregon. I request your support of House Bill 3063 which will expand incentives for an array of mental health housing across our state. This investment is needed to support our long term objectives of tax payer cost savings and healthier Oregon Communities. This legislation will provide a safety net to our most vulnerable populations and will assure stronger and safer communities here in Lane County.

Each year, as one of Oregon's most populous counties, Lane County serves thousands of low-income residents who qualify for mental health services under the federally funded, Oregon Health Plan. This funding allows Oregon the opportunity to achieve Department of Justice objectives including a decrease in length of hospital stays, ability to maintain adults with SPMI (severe and persistent mental illness) in less restrictive settings in the community, increase in individuals seen by physical health care provider who received an SBIRT (screening brief intervention referral to treatment), as well as overall compliance with the Olmstead Act. House Bill 3063 will assist in providing successful outcomes, as well as demonstrate Oregon's commitment to its most vulnerable individuals, families and communities.

Please work with your colleagues to protect these individuals and families. Continued investment in their well-being is not only a humane response, but one that prevents future financial repercussions.

Thank you for your efforts in addressing this important matter.

Sincerely

Jose E. Soto-Gates
Lane County Mental Health Advisory Council Member