



**Sharon Meieran**

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To: House Committee On Human Services and Housing  
From: Sharon Meieran, Multnomah County Commissioner  
Date: April 6, 2017  
Re: Support for HB 3063

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Chair Keny-Guyer, Vice Chairs Olson and Sanchez, and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bill 3063, legislation that will help keep individuals with mental illness safe and healthy in their communities.

As an emergency physician, I regularly care for individuals who come to the emergency room for mental health crises. Many times, these patients are in such crisis that they pose a danger to themselves or others, and they cannot be safely discharged to the community. However, I also frequently see patients who don't quite fit this criteria: they are not experiencing such a severe state of crisis to require acute inpatient hospitalization, but they are not well enough to function independently in their home or their community. We spend millions of dollars boarding people for days and even weeks in our ERs, often because there is simply nowhere for them to go, or they are unable to engage in treatment because there is not a stable, safe place for them to live. The financial cost borne by our communities, health care systems, and corrections systems to care for these individuals is tremendous. The cost in terms of trauma, psychological, and emotional injury suffered by the individuals themselves is immeasurable.

Housing is essential to health, and nowhere is this more apparent than in the case of individuals suffering from severe mental illness. It is an inefficient use of our local, state and federal resources to continue treating the costly crises, without investing more deeply in supported housing for these individuals. Investing further upstream in stabilizing, preventive resources like housing is more humane, and it's a sound financial strategy for addressing the root causes of some of the intractable problems we witness in our communities.

I strongly urge you to support HB 3063, which will enable the Oregon Health Authority, in collaboration with people with lived experience, advocates, health care providers, law enforcement, and other organizations, to take action. We must invest our limited resources wisely and meaningfully, and I believe HB 3063 presents an opportunity to do that.

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon Meieran