



June 13, 2017

Co-Chairs Hass and Barnhart, Honorable members of the committee:

Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of 2830 and the efforts to find a sustainable source of revenue for our shared future.

I am here to urge a continued and prioritized investment in the Emergency Housing Account (EHA) and the State Homeless Assistance Program (SHAP). EHA is the most flexible tool to provide short-term assistance to prevent and end homelessness. SHAP is used to provide emergency shelter. Together these two funding streams help communities craft unique and effective solutions to the constantly growing challenge of homelessness.

This year's Point in Time count for Lane County showed a 5% increase in the number of homeless counted. After several years of declining numbers, the 2017 count illustrates the continuing and urgent need for safety net funding. EHA and SHAP are safety-net funds and will be critical for local communities called upon to respond to the growing pressures caused by cuts to other state programs. Poverty, hunger and homelessness in our communities has reached a crisis point. Oregon continues to place in the top ten on the National Alliance chart measuring the extent of homelessness. So many public funding sources are restricted and their application is unhelpfully narrow. EHA and SHAP give communities the opportunity to develop new solutions with hope.

In Lane County, an unusual community coalition of the leaders of several key Lane County agencies - courts, jail, police, Behavioral Health, hospitals and non-profit service providers - are joined in a common effort. We've used EHA funding to launch a national evidence-based, well-researched best practice called Frequent User System Engagement. Data from the agencies at the table helps to identify the individuals with the most costly impact on our community's system of care. These are our "frequent users." A team is tasked to provide outreach and intervention to these identified individuals and engage them in the systems that can provide housing and wrap around supports thereby reducing their impact. We are nine months into this "pilot" and the results are very promising. We believe this approach will be a solution for communities across the state. We need EHA funding to continue this effort. Nationally, the research demonstrates that FUSE programs divert high impact users away from high cost services and reduce costs while improving the quality of life for the individual and the community.

The need for EHA and SHAP flexible funds has skyrocketed with the housing crisis. We encourage you to fund EHA and SHAP this session. Let's act to prevent or end homelessness for thousands of Oregonians.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Susan Ban". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Susan A. Ban, Executive Director, ShelterCare