



January 31, 2018

House Committee on Human Services and Housing  
Oregon State Legislature  
900 Court Street NE  
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Support for HB 4007 to increase the document recording fee for emergency rent assistance, access to home ownership and the development of more affordable housing.

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

Please allow me to introduce myself as the Executive Director of ShelterCare, a non-profit human services agency serving the Lane County community since 1970. Founded to provide emergency shelter for families with children who were without housing, the agency expanded over the past 48 years to address the root causes of homeless and expand housing services to populations of vulnerable, disabled, disenfranchised and very low income adults.

Today we serve many individuals with long histories of homelessness. Our funding is focused on those with serious mental illness, acquired brain injury, high rates of vulnerability and medically fragile conditions. We continue to support families with children. Some are referred to us by DHS Child Welfare. Others have chronic histories of homelessness. All are very low income and most have significant barriers to overcome in order to be successful in housing.

Housing is key to achieving stability and wellness for the individuals we serve. Housing gives people an opportunity to build better lives. Data from one funded pilot program, Frequent User System Engagement (FUSE), demonstrates significant community savings associated with access to housing. For the frequent user population enrolled in FUSE, overall health costs decreased by 53%, Eugene Police Department arrests decreased by 82%, Lane County jail intakes decreased by 50%, and Municipal Court Citations decreased by 75%.

Complicating our work to successfully house program participants – individuals, yet especially families - is the Lane County housing market. The share of renter households with a severe rent burden in Lane County is 30%, the second highest in the state along with Jackson County with Benton County being the highest at 35%. Our community needs help. We need to

remove the barriers that Oregonians with low incomes face in finding housing they can afford and sustain.

HB 4007 will help by expanding resources that underwrite real solutions for households experiencing or facing homelessness. In particular, our program participants – especially families – benefit from the Emergency Rent Assistance grants that limit or prevent a period of homelessness. The expansion of affordable housing is also greatly relevant to ShelterCare’s consumers. The Poverty and Homelessness Board of Lane County has identified a gap and a goal – 600 new units of affordable housing by 2021. Some of those units will be dedicated to serve those individuals with significant barriers such as poor rental histories, criminal histories, and poor credit histories. These are the individuals, once housed, who are no longer a cost burden to the community’s services (police, corrections, hospital, courts).

Please support passage of HB 4007. The resource provided by HB 4007 will help us bend the cost curve on the services impacted by the condition of homelessness. More importantly HB 4007 will provide communities with resources to respond effectively and humanely to the human tragedy that attends those living without shelter and without support.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Susan Ban, Executive Director