



February 8, 2018

The Honorable Jeff Reardon, Chair  
House Higher Education and Workforce Development Committee  
900 Court St NE, H-473  
Salem, OR, 97301

Dear Representative Reardon:

On behalf of Central City Concern (CCC), I am writing to express our support for House Bill 4042, Prosperity-1000.

Two of Central City Concern's affordable housing sites – Chez Ami and Town Center Courtyards – are located in your legislative district. In the last year, CCC's continuum of integrated healthcare, housing and employment programming touched the lives of 14,000 Oregonians living in Portland. While our Employment Access Center is regarded nationally by HUD, SAMHSA, DOL and the USDA for our successes, we were only able to serve 1,200 people through this site last year. The targeted and evidence-based practice employment services we provide are often coordinated with primary and behavioral health care and supportive housing. As a result, we were able to assist over 700 people in securing jobs with over 500 employers in the community last year. Those jobs were secured by clients who in many systems would be deemed as "unemployable" given their histories of criminal justice involvement, behavioral health conditions and homelessness.

We know that when our clients secure employment, they become less reliant on federal benefits and entitlements including SNAP, TANF and HUD subsidies and are able to resume their roles as parents, partners and strong community members. We also know that securing employment has positive impacts on housing, health, and education outcomes – not just for an individual, but their household as well. Because of this, funding employment services is a critical part of addressing housing stability and the larger housing and affordability crisis facing the state.

CCC has been able to accomplish our employment programming successes by braiding together a variety of funding streams including HUD-CDBG, USDA FSET 50/50, City and County General Funds, private foundations and the Portland-Metro workforce development system.

HB 4042 offers an innovative approach to address poverty and build a scalable, sustainable model that supports individual and business prosperity across the State. Since emerging from the recession, Washington and Multnomah counties have produced over 125,000 jobs and unemployment has fallen to 3.7%. But these on-average figures

obscure the reality of increasing income disparity, growing low-income employment, and rising poverty caused by structural changes in the economy.

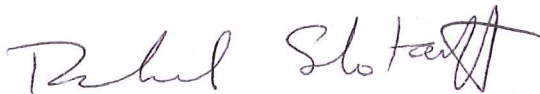
Washington and Multnomah counties are home to the highest concentrations of poverty in the State and more than 166,000 people in the region live in poverty. Forty percent of all Oregonians of color living in poverty live in the region. More than 30,000 regional residents are unemployed and thousands work full-time but can't make ends meet because of low wages, insufficient skills and few prospects for career and wage advancement.

At the same time, regional employers that offer high quality jobs in industries such as healthcare, construction, and manufacturing are facing a shortage of skilled workers. The net effect of this divide- unskilled regional residents struggling with insufficient, stagnating wages on the one hand, and employers grappling with a shortage of skilled workers to drive productivity and growth on the other – is a significant missed opportunity to strengthen our labor market and support our growing economy.

HB 4042 offers an opportunity to help bridge this divide and ensure all residents, and especially those living in areas of concentrated poverty, have an opportunity to fully participate in the region's economic success. HB 4042 offers a unique chance to foster a stronger and more equitable future for the region and the State, and we urge your support.

We know that you value equitable opportunities for the most vulnerable populations in our community. Your consideration and support are much appreciated.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rachel Solotaroff". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized initial "R" and "S".

Rachel Solotaroff, MD, MCR  
President and CEO  
Central City Concern