



HEATHER BUCH

Lane County Commissioner
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Oregon Legislature Joint Special Committee on Coronavirus Response

Dear Co-Chair Holvey and Co-Chair Roblan:

I understand that during today's meeting of the Committee there was a conversation regarding how to best manage Oregon's homeless population through the duration of the pandemic. I very much appreciate that you elevated that conversation and wanted to let you know that Lane County has undertaken the following steps to assist with those who are homeless in our community:

- We have designated two buildings at the Lane County Fairgrounds for homelessness assistance. One building is for those individuals who are not exhibiting any signs of illness, while the other will be used for segregating those individuals who do become ill. We are additionally opening a site in Springfield at the Willamalane Memorial Center.
- To undertake this work, we have contracted with the St. Vincent DePaul Society of Lane County (SDVP). This organization continues to provide a broad breadth of homelessness assistance services within Lane County. They are coordinating a number of sub-providers, as well as coordination with other organizations within Lane County that also provide services to un-sheltered individuals, for example the White Bird Medical clinic for health care services.

Like so much of our emergency response, these efforts do not come without cost. We believe some of these will qualify for reimbursement under the disaster declaration of the federal government, but our outlay of resources in the short run is a challenge.

As much of what your Committee is doing is attempting to plan for a budget package, I can provide you with what we feel will be Lane County's response needs moving forward:

- The temporary health management practices we are undertaking at the Lane County Fairgrounds, which we are assuming will last for a period of 6-10 weeks, and includes some minor renovations and paying SDVP, will cost \$3.5m. We are seeking an amount equal to this from the Emergency Housing Account.
- The ongoing need within our County was well-identified within HB 4001 (2020). We continue to seek funding for a navigation center that would be operational this winter. Note that at the time we negotiated HB 4001, we assumed the City of Eugene and Lane County could provide operating funds for that center during the first year. Given what has occurred over the past six weeks, I'm less convinced we can provide those operational dollars. As Representative Holvey and I had discussed during the 2020 session, we were consistently asking for \$8.5M for that center, and I would ask you to continue to advocate for that amount.

In closing, I so appreciate the work you and your Committee are undertaking. I know it goes without saying, but it is absolutely critical work. I urge you to keep at it, and please let me know if you need additional information.

Sincerely,

Heather Buch