



Testimony in Support of Legislative Concept 1684
Interim House Committee on Housing

Speaker of the House Tina Kotek
December 15, 2020

Thank you for the opportunity to reacquaint everyone with my emergency shelter siting bill from the 2020 short session, formally HB 4001, now LC 1684.

In February, I came before this committee and shared the findings from Oregon Housing and Community Services' Oregon Statewide Shelter Study, which concluded: "Homelessness, especially unsheltered homelessness, is of catastrophic proportions in Oregon." We learned that Oregon is one of four states in which more than half (61 percent) of all people experiencing homelessness were found living in unsheltered locations.

This was the situation before the greatest public health and economic crisis of our lifetimes. The COVID-19 pandemic has only magnified this crisis. And now winter is here. This week my office received a panicked message from a shelter provider warning that their warming center capacity is 300 beds short of where they were this time last year.

While we are doing all we can to keep Oregonians housed during the worst stretch of this pandemic, we must continue to have an emergency mindset to take on our state's shelter shortage. We know that even with a vaccine now in our state, we are still months away from a return to normal and our unsheltered populations will continue to face enormous risks from this virus. It is critical, now more than ever, that we take action and increase our shelter capacity.

To refresh everyone's memory, LC 1684 includes the same provisions contained HB 4001-C:

Shelter Siting:

- Requires local governments to waive design, planning and zoning regulations for approving the siting of emergency shelters.
- Shelters would have to comply with applicable building codes, have adequate transportation access and not pose any identifiable public health or safety concern.
- Shelters could not be sited on land designated as natural disaster/hazard (e.g., flood plains) or in places where there is an environmental hazard.
- The operator of the shelter is either a local government, organization with two years of experience operating emergency shelter using best practices or nonprofits who can partner with the above entities.

- The siting authority expires July 1, 2022, but the shelter can remain after the sunset.
- Should the shelter cease to operate, the normal land use regulations would apply again.

Transitional Housing: Gives local governments more flexibility in siting transitional housing, specifically more authority regarding use of parking lots.

Funding: Appropriates one-time General Fund, specifically:

- \$26.5 million in grants for increasing low-barrier shelter capacity, providing necessary facilities/amenities (e.g., restroom and hygiene facilities) and rapid rehousing services;
- \$16.5 million for navigation centers, in Bend, Eugene, McMinnville, Medford and Salem; and
- \$2 million to OHCS to develop and provide technical assistance.

Our communities have continued to ask for this support since the end of the 2020 session. This bill won't solve every problem. This is a complex challenge that requires coordinating several approaches at once. But this proposal – like the funds the Emergency Board allocated for Project Turnkey and the expanded shelter provider eligibility for Emergency Solutions Grants – will work together to reduce barriers to shelter and save lives.

Thank you for the time and I'm happy to take your questions.