

Subject: Senate Bill 595 transient lodging tax

To: Chair Senator Fagan, Vice-Chair Senator Heard and members of the Senate Committee on Housing

From: Mercedes Elizalde, Public Policy Director, Central City Concern

Date: 2/15/2019

Central City Concern is a non-profit direct service organization that provides integrated primary and behavioral health care, supportive and affordable housing, and employment services to people impacted by homelessness in the Tri-County area. Central City Concern operates about 2,000 units of affordable housing, serves 9,000 patients annually through our 13 Federally Qualified Health Centers, makes 1,200 job placements annually and operates social services for the community justice programs in Multnomah and Clackamas counties. This year we are celebrating 40 years of service to our communities.

Central City Concern is writing in support of Senate Bill 595 and we greatly appreciate Senator Johnson's leadership in bringing this discussion forward. Affordable housing and proper resident support services are vital to a growing and thriving local economy. When more people are safely and stably housed, communities are safer, more welcoming and better able to meet all their social needs. CCC has had the opportunity to partner with local businesses including members of the tourism community to support local programs to address the ongoing housing crisis. We know our partners in the tourism and business community see impacts to their work both through housing instability in their workforce and unsheltered homelessness on our streets. We know each community needs to identify how best to use any funds available for affordable housing to meet their needs. We would hope that both the state and our local government partners would prioritize using these funds to support permanent supportive housing (PSH). We hear from both private and government partners that they want to see a visible difference for people most impacted by homelessness and poverty who are currently living unsheltered in our communities.

With the recent passage of the City of Portland Housing Bond, Metro Council Affordable Housing Bond and pending investment at the state level there is more funds than ever for housing production. However, given that Oregon is not using our Medicaid waiver to target PSH services, there is currently not a plan for long-term stable funding for resident support services that make PSH possible and successful. Without service dollars, people who are experiencing chronic homelessness, serious and persistent mental illness (SPMI) and other health complications such as substance use disorder, cognitive impairments from traumatic brain injuries or developmental disabilities, or other chronic debilitating health conditions, will not adequately be served by these new affordable housing investments. While there are plenty of people in need of affordable housing that do not include these populations, if local communities want a visible difference in street homelessness and long shelter stays, these are the populations that need to be prioritized for the new affordable housing developments.

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Funds that could become available for housing interventions with the passage of SB 595 can make a big difference in targeting populations most in needed of stable housing when paired with the capital investments that the state is also considering this legislative session.

Thank you,

Mercedes Elizalde
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Central City Concern

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