

April 18, 2019

Written Testimony

Ryan Fisher

RE: SB 1045

On behalf of Harbor of Hope

Chair Hass, Vice-Chair Bentz, members of the committee

My name is Ryan Fisher and I'm here before you today on behalf of Harbor of Hope.

Harbor of Hope is a non-profit working to bring innovative solutions to homelessness. Our highest profile project to date is bringing private and public resources to create a "homeless navigation center" in NW Portland. Harbor of Hope supports SB 1045.

Everyone needs a safe place to call home. We need to build more affordable housing. This committee has done good work to that end. At the same time, we need additional strategies. This is where Harbor of Hope's mission lies. That's why we're here to support an innovative strategy that can provide thousands of homes for people without hammering a nail. This strategy is called Home Sharing.

The idea is to make use of the tens of thousands of under-utilized homes in Oregon. These are homes where the owner has extra space and needs the extra income provided by a long-term renter who cannot afford a single bedroom apartment.

Think people confronted by rising property taxes paired with retiring boomers on fixed income.

Our vision is to organize a state-wide Home Share program working in collaboration with with non-profits, innovative businesses and local governments.

For many, Home Sharing will provide affordability simply because renting a room is more affordable than renting an apartment. For others, even the cost of renting a room is beyond their means. This is where SB 1045 can help.

SB 1045 essentially offers local governments the ability to provide a targeted rental subsidy to qualified, low-income renters that participate in a home share program. It does so through a customized property tax exemption to homeowners who rent a room in their home at an affordable rate.

We know from other successful home share programs in other states, that the first step to a successful home share program is recruiting and educating homeowners that will offer a room for an affordable rent.

SB 1045 will help attract those homeowners by offering property tax relief to participants

We know that local governments need to be certain that resources intended to provide relief to low-income renters do so efficiently.

SB 1045 leverages the work of nonprofits such as NW Pilot Project, who has provided written testimony in support of this bill, and Mid-Willamette Valley Community Action Agency, who you'll hear from shortly, to verify the income of renters supported by the property tax exemption.

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The draft before you is the result of work with Harbor of Hope and incorporates feedback from D.O.R. We are working with county assessors and Dept. Of Revenue to make sure the bill can be clearly implemented, and that the dates of implementation are workable.

Today, you'll hear from national and local housing experts that have identified home sharing as an innovative solution to our housing shortages.

You'll hear from a software developer that has successfully paired tens of thousands of home seekers with home sharers in other states.

You'll hear from non-profits who have long waitlists of people who need, and can't find an affordable place to live.

We know that home sharing will provide rent relief to thousands of Oregonians. SB 1045 can expand that relief to people with very low incomes and very few options.

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