



TO: Senate Committee on Housing
FROM: Cities in Oregon
DATE: March 22, 2019
RE: Support for HB 2916

Thank you for considering House Bill 2916 and this important tool for local governments to address a critical need for transitional accommodations to serve people experiencing homelessness. HB 2916 lifts the current, one-size-fits-all limit of two parcels per municipality for transitional housing campgrounds. HB 2916 allows cities to determine how many transitional housing areas can be designated, of what size, and in what location in order to meet the needs of their communities. HB 2916 allows jurisdictions to pursue practical transitional housing solutions after fully considering and balancing the totality of the circumstances in each of their unique situations.

HB 2916 addresses a real and immediate issue that many cities are having. As examples:

- **Medford.** Rogue Retreat operates a transitional housing campground called Hope Village, located partly on City-owned property and partly on adjoining private property. First authorized by the City of Medford on November 17, 2016, Hope Village has been an unqualified success as it provides housing, as well as counseling and other on-site services, and facilitates its clients' ability to reach other community services. It helps its clients not only regain access to benefits to which they are already entitled, but also provides them the stability, life skills, and volunteer work experience that give them the tools to potentially rejoin the paid workforce. Despite its success, Hope Village cannot currently be replicated within the City of Medford because ORS 446.265 states that municipalities cannot designate more than *two parcels* of land for transitional housing. Because Hope Village straddles public property and adjoining private property, this two-parcel statutory limit for the entire City has now been filled. The local need for transitional housing within the City of Medford, however, cannot be met by Hope Village alone. We need to do more.
- **Portland.** The City of Portland and Multnomah County's Joint Office of Homeless Services is actively implementing a strategy to expand and transform the community's emergency shelter response to homelessness. Transitional housing accommodations have an important role to play in that strategy. Dignity Village is a transitional housing

campground in Portland that has provided safety off the streets to at least 60 people per night for more than 15 years. Sites like Dignity Village are a complement to other sheltering strategies, serving a segment of the unsheltered population that for various reasons is not well served in conventional facility-based shelters. This sheltering strategy also often better utilizes the strengths of participants and community volunteers, which can both reduce costs and build deeper community support for efforts to address homelessness. With the appropriate support services, transitional housing campgrounds are a viable alternative form of shelter at a time of crisis when communities need to have every tool at their disposal to care for those who are vulnerable on the streets and do not yet have access to permanent affordable housing. Like other forms of shelter, the City of Portland should be able to determine how many of these transitional housing campgrounds we need, given who is experiencing homelessness and the resources we have available.

We believe that local government are best suited to make decisions as to transitional housing in the community and ask that you allows us the opportunity to do so by passing HB 2916.