



## Testimony by City of Wilsonville Mayor Tim Knapp to Amend HB 4001-1:

### ***Amend Proposed Legislation to Remove Preemption, Provide Incentives for Special Housing to be Sited in Cities with Transit and Social Services***

Scheduled for public hearing on February 10, 2020, before  
the House Committee on Human Services and Housing

#### **Chair Keny-Guyer, Vice-Chairs Noble and Williams, and Members of the Committee:**

The City of Wilsonville applauds Speaker Kotek’s desire to dedicate state resources to alleviate homelessness, and strongly supports state investments in shelter and social services addressing homelessness, substance-use-disorder, and behavioral health crisis in Oregon.

The City, however, is greatly concerned about an indiscriminate, blanket preemption against municipal authority found in Section 3, that “a local government shall approve an application for the development or use of land \* \* \* notwithstanding \* \* \* any local land use regulation, zoning ordinance, regional framework plan, functional plan or comprehensive plan.”

The City also understands that the bill would allow the siting of shelters in rural, unincorporated county lands outside of Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) areas. Such a practice appears problematic from both a state land-use goal that advocates urbanization only with municipal governance and a generally-accepted social-services principal that homeless populations are best served when located in closer proximity to key services.

The City believes that it is problematic to site homeless shelters and affordable housing on the UGB edge due to the general lack of public transit service and no ready-access to key commercial retail and social services that are generally located in cities. Rather, shelters and affordable housing should be located in cities along transit corridors and near commercial retail and social services needed by lower-income and other qualified residents.

The City respectfully suggests that this kind of policy harms both the intended beneficiaries of such a policy—lower-income, homeless and other residents—and the greater community. Placement of emergency shelters or transitional housing outside UGB areas far from transit routes creates a disincentive for those using such facilities to access other beneficial services. It also places undue hardship on established residential neighborhoods that do not offer the support infrastructure for those experiencing homelessness or mental-health issues.

Wilsonville is also concerned that such a policy position could seem to produce at least two negative results, including potentially abetting special interest objectives to develop land outside cities without the correct level of supporting public infrastructure or leading to the creation of centralized, rural low-income zones.

**Wilsonville is a community that is very familiar with housing special populations, including those who are lower-income or suffer from mental-health and behavioral-health issues.** The City of Wilsonville hosted the Dammasch State Hospital for 34 years, from 1961 to 1995, and after its closure the City subsequently worked with the State to successfully integrate mental-health housing into the new Villebois residential community. Wilsonville now hosts five low-income and mental-health housing facilities that serve 365 residents.

When the community's largest mobile-home park with 256 low-income and senior residents closed in 2012 and was converted to a denser residential use, the City worked with Oregon Housing and Community Services and other partners to develop and operate the Creekside Woods Apartments, an 84-unit low-income facility located adjacent to the Community Center in the town-center area. The City also passed an ordinance requiring the mobile-home operator selling the land to pay for relocation costs for displaced residents.

The City has actively advocated for siting additional behavioral-healthcare facilities for the greater Portland and North Willamette Valley Region in Wilsonville. In 2016, the City approved all applications to allow United Health Care to develop and operate the proposed 100-bed Willamette Valley Behavioral Healthcare facility that is awaiting a Certificate of Need in 2020 from the Public Health Division of the Oregon Health Authority.

Additionally, Wilsonville's South Metro Area Regional Transit (SMART) public-transit agency provides regular *free, no-cost* regular fixed-route bus service throughout town and ADA/paratransit dial-a-ride service to Portland-area medical facilities. The provision of easily accessible public transit and social services is crucial to successful plans to address issues of homelessness, drug-dependency and mental health.

**As a home-rule municipality with carefully crafted urban growth plans, the City of Wilsonville supports amending the preemptions and unintended policy consequences of HB 4001-1.** Suggested amendments include requiring that emergency shelters can only be located in cities and that both public transit and appropriate social services must be available. The requirement for blanket approval by local governments, regardless of whether or not a particular location has the supporting physical and social infrastructure to support this special population, should be removed.

Furthermore, the legislation could be strengthened by providing State financial incentives to cities to help them make the commitment to accommodate housing for their residents who are homeless and those suffering from drug dependency and mental-health issues. Incentives could include State planning assistance and funding specific social services focused on the issues of homelessness, drug-dependency and behavioral health, as well as additional public-transit transportation funding assistance.

The City respectfully urges the committee to amend HB 4001-1. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Tim Knapp, Mayor  
City of Wilsonville