



## **House Committee on Human Services and Housing**

Testimony on HB 4001 -1 Amendments

February 6, 2020

Chair Keny-Guyer and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on the -1 amendments to HB 4001. The Oregon Farm Bureau fully supports our state's efforts to address the needs of unhoused Oregonians and develop additional options for shelter for unhoused Oregonians. However, we also strongly support Oregon's land use system, and want to express our concerns about some provisions of the -1 amendments that we think could inadvertently promote the development of prime farmland around the state.

By way of background, the Oregon Farm Bureau (OFB) is the state's largest agricultural trade association, representing nearly 7,000 farm and ranch families across the state. OFB's primary concerns lie with Section 3 of the -1 amendments. That section appears to allow a very broad class emergency shelters on farmland, without going through any of the traditional land use processes. Oregon's land use processes exist to protect Oregon's farmland, which is growing increasingly more important to our state, nation and world due to shifting climate patterns that are going to make Oregon well-suited to increase our ability to supply food and fiber to a growing world.

In addressing the needs of those without housing, it is critical that solutions focus on areas that will utilize existing infrastructure, be close to transportation facilities needed to access medical care, jobs, and other critical services. Siting shelters on farmland is antithetical to these needs – rural areas lack quick and easy access to healthcare, require cars for transportation, and require the development of permanent infrastructure to provide safe drinking water, access to sanitary facilities, and fire protection. To comply with Section 3(2), a shelter would likely have to construct infrastructure such as septic systems, permanent buildings, new roads to provide for public transit, and possibly have to obtain a water right to operate a rural well, among others.

Many rural areas already struggle to provide enough resources and infrastructure for current residents, especially for fire protection, reliable drinking water, and septic infrastructure. The burden an emergency shelter would have on EFU land could likely overload the system. We strongly believe that shelters should be sited in urban areas with access to the urban levels of service the facilities will require.

We are also concerned that the shelters proposed under the bill will not be truly temporary if sited in rural areas. In most rural areas, construction of a shelter would require building new buildings and infrastructure that would not be easy to remove once the shelter closes. Further, the definition of emergency shelter is very broad, and seems to allow a broader class of uses in both inside and outside of proposed buildings than would be necessary for a temporary shelter. The language also lacks clarity as to what “temporary” means.

Finally, we are very concerned with the potential for emergency shelters to present real and significant conflicts with neighboring farm uses. Farms use heavy machinery and equipment, produce loud noises and often strong smells, and involve operations that start very early in the morning and run through the night, especially during harvest. We are very concerned about the operators or residents of emergency shelters complaining about the impacts or operations of neighboring farms or causing spillover impacts on existing farm operations. As drafted, these facilities would likely be sited with any look at potential impacts to neighboring farms, and don’t require a local land use approval prior to construction. This could result in shelters being constructed in places with a very high likelihood of conflict with long-standing farm uses.

We sincerely appreciate the efforts of this bill to provide needed services for unhoused Oregonians, and believe this is an issue critical to all Oregonians. We look forward to working with the Committee to help ensure these facilities are sited in the best place for the residents, their communities, and Oregon’s family farms and ranches. Please let us know if you have any further questions, and thank you again for the opportunity to comment.

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