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House Committee on Revenue
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Support HB 4164

Chair Nathanson, Vice-Chair Marsh, Vice-Chair Reschke, and members of the Revenue Committee.

It would raise the current restriction on the Metro Regional Government's ability to levy an income tax, from one to two percent; [short pause] for the sole, and exclusive, purpose of asking voters whether they would support an income tax to fund homeless services across Multnomah, Washington, and Clackamas counties.

My message to you this morning is that voters are ready to make this decision, and I urge you to let them.

1. You don't need me to tell you that homelessness is the highest priority for the residents of our three counties, and that it has been for some time.
2. And you don't need me to tell you that the suffering we see on our sidewalks, in our parks, and next to freeways, is a direct result of a housing crisis that has now engulfed the entire state.
3. And you don't need me to tell you that in order to address this crisis, it will take tremendous effort...will...and resources.

I am here today with my friend from Clackamas County, Chair Jim Bernard, to tell you that local governments along with 100s of businesses, housing advocates, and service providers, have the first two covered.

The Multnomah, Clackamas and Washington chairs are all members of a coalition called Here Together. It includes over fifty organizations, it spans our three counties, and we have been preparing for over a year to get it right.

And in that time, we have been hard at work.

You may have heard me say before that we know what solves homelessness; we just need to do more of it. And that's true. But we needed to know what it would take to scale up supportive housing, not just in Multnomah County, but at a region-wide level.

So we commissioned four reports from three separate agencies: Portland State University, the Corporation for Supportive Housing and EcoNorthwest. And thanks to that research, and thanks to the work that we've been doing for years with service providers, we know what we need to do to address the crisis before us.

Our communities are ready to get to work, and we are asking you today to support raising the cap for this narrow purpose, and this narrow purpose alone.

Because in a crisis, our response must be commensurate to the scale, no matter how daunting the task. And this crisis is not simply going to go away if we just wait for people to get back on their feet, or for the economy to just "pick up."

The crisis before us may be more complex, and more challenging than we've seen in a long time. It also crosses multiple jurisdictions. But fortunately, we couldn't be better positioned than we are right now.


We have built a broad and lasting coalition; our county leaders are aligned in the mission; and we have a regional government in Metro who is ready to partner with us.

Because of these partnerships, we will know exactly how to deploy the funding on Day One.

So the question isn't "how," it's how soon.

And we're ready now.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Deborah Kafoury". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Deborah Kafoury
Multnomah County Chair