

Co-Chair Girod, Co-Chair Holvey, Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of the development of Multnomah County's Behavioral Health Resource Center.

My name is Barb Snow, I am a Clinical Director at Cascadia Behavioral Healthcare managing our Crisis Services Division. As part of this work, I oversee our Shelter Behavioral Health Team in Multnomah County, and I was asked to share my experiences with this work and provide some information as to why the Behavioral Health Resource Center will be so valuable for our community.

The Shelter Team was developed in collaboration with the Joint Office of Homeless Services and Multnomah County Mental Health and Addiction Services Division to address the increased behavioral health needs for those individuals accessing publicly funded shelter services. It began operations in January of 2019.

It was established because our community leaders recognized that our shelter system was not adequately resourced to meet the needs of a burgeoning population of individuals and families experiencing homelessness who have significant mental health and substance use challenges.

The objective of the Shelter Team is to prevent, de-escalate and respond to behavioral health-related challenges among shelter guests. The team's goal is to decrease the need for higher level mental health supports, decrease involvement of law enforcement, and to mitigate discharges or exclusions from shelter services.

This program has been highly successful. From January through October, our team has provided over 2000 services to over 280 unique individuals across 21 shelters. We have helped individuals access housing supports, mental health treatment, substance use treatment, domestic violence services and vocational counseling.

While the Shelter Team is an extremely valuable resource to address needs for those with behavioral health conditions in our shelters, it is not enough. We are facing a crisis in our community. So many of our most vulnerable citizens, those experiencing chronic homelessness and significant behavioral health challenges, do not have access to the support they so desperately need.

As such, our community needs a robust resource that offers comprehensive services to address these complex needs, as well as a continuum of shelter and transitional housing options. We therefore strongly support the development of the Behavioral Health Resource Center in Multnomah County- while this will not solve homelessness in our community, it is a big step in the right direction.

Thank you so much for the opportunity to present, and thank you for your leadership on this important issue.

Respectfully,



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