



Health Department

Date: February 14, 2020

TO: The Honorable Fred Girod and Paul Holvey, Co-Chairs
Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Capital
Construction

SUBJECT: HB 5202 modifies description of project for which lottery bonds may be issued.

Co-Chair Girod and Co-Chair Holvey, Members of the Capital Construction Committee:

For the record, my name is Ebony Clarke. I serve as the Director of Multnomah County's Mental Health & Addiction Services Division.

Multnomah County, in collaboration with our community partners, has identified the need in our community for a centrally located, dedicated Behavioral Health Resource Center to provide services during the day, overnight shelter, and transitional housing to serve our most vulnerable population.

Many existing shelters and treatment centers have barriers to care that can prevent individuals experiencing homelessness from being able to access behavioral health services and temporary housing. A peer-led, low-barrier Behavioral Health Resource Center would allow people to access mental health services and transitional housing in the Portland city center where they are often already living and finding access to other basic needs.

Our plan is to serve individuals who are chronically homeless and suffer from a severe and persistent mental illness. We will do that in a few ways -- through a day center, mental health shelter and supportive bridge housing. Individuals engaging with the Resource Center are likely those who have not been successful in our current shelter system, and who need a greater amount of support. In developing our programming for the Resource Center, community stakeholder engagement has been an integral part of the process. The initial efforts have yielded valuable information around community needs and have sparked much interest in the program. The engagement began in early 2019 with businesses, neighbors and peer groups and continues today.

Testimony: Ebony Clarke, Multnomah County

The surrounding businesses and other neighbors of 333 SW Park Ave in Downtown Portland have a unique vantage point to consider in developing the Resource Center. Their knowledge, community understanding, and experiences with the population served will be sought throughout the development process through a series of feedback sessions.

We have invited individuals with lived experiences including those affiliated with large and small agencies, shelters, substance use treatment programs, mental health treatment facilities and culturally specific services, who will help guide the development process -- each providing a unique and valuable lens. This stakeholder group has provided and will continue to provide recommendations, feedback and suggestions. To date, six peer stakeholder meetings have taken place. They will continue regularly through 2020 as Carleton Hart Architecture offers sample design ideas to the group for feedback and recommendations. We are currently planning what stakeholder engagement will look like after opening the Resource Center and launching the program, and know that peers will continue to have a strong voice in this critical project.

To conclude, we are working to develop a center that will:

- Create accessible resources specifically for individuals who are considered chronically homeless
- Provide support through a dignified, equity and trauma-informed approach
- Address resource gaps for individuals who have behavioral health issues and experience homelessness; and
- Do all this in a facility co-located with low-barrier programming like peer support, service referral and housing options.

Thank you for your consideration in supporting Multnomah County's ask for \$12.5 Million in Lottery Bonds.

Sincerely,



Ebony Sloan Clarke, LCSW, MSW
Division Director
Mental Health & Addiction Services Division
Multnomah County Health Department

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