



**Testimony before House Committee on Revenue
February 17, 2020**

Good morning Chair Nathanson, Vice Chairs Marsh and Reshcke, Members of the Committee.

My name is Ashley Henry. I'm here this morning representing over 400 members of Business For A Better Portland. We represent companies and organizations in the Portland region who believe that in order for business to thrive, it is critical to do business in a thriving community.

It is that fundamental belief that drove our organization, in its earliest days, to engage in efforts to address our city's housing and homelessness crisis.

Even before we incorporated as a membership organization, we rallied support for Portland's first affordable housing bond because we knew then as we know now the economic vitality of our region depends directly on our collective ability to provide

adequate services for those suffering from disabilities and experiencing homelessness.

Over the short 3 years of our organization, we have been deeply involved in the region's efforts to address the crisis.

Our work for affordable housing started with support of the Portland Housing Bond in 2016 followed by support for passage of the Metro region affordable housing bond in 2018.

Since 2018, BBPDX has been actively engaged with the HereTogether coalition in an effort to leverage these important voter approved investments to comprehensively address our region's homeless crisis. In that time, the coalition has unified around the urgent need for a regional approach to addressing the homeless crisis, a framework for delivering services that meet the complex needs of people experiencing long-term homelessness, and the community engagement and oversight structure to ensure goals are met.

This has been a large undertaking and the fact that so many diverse partners have reached an agreement on the core concept is a reason to celebrate.

We are all in agreement that \$250M is necessary to meet the need. The remaining question is how best to structure a revenue mechanism to meet the need.

One of the proposals the coalition, including BBPDX, has considered is a tax on high income earners.

Let me be clear, our association has not yet taken a position on the structure, but we are committed to examining and considering all viable options. That is why I am here today.

As we continue this work, we are asking legislators to grant Metro the leeway to consider a range of revenue mechanisms, including an income tax of no more than 2 percent.

I cannot say that our association would support such a tax, but we believe this conversation should continue at the regional level.

This is a regional crisis that demands a regional response. Any solution will require support from Metro, stakeholders, and ultimately the voters. Your support for the HB 4164 gives us the opportunity to make well-informed decisions on how best to move forward.