



December 21, 2020

The Honorable Peter Courtney and Tina Kotek
Co-Chairs, Joint Committee on the Third Special Session of 2020
State Capitol
Salem, Oregon

Re: Legislative Concept 18, eviction moratoriums and housing assistance

Dear Co-Chairs Courtney and Kotek and members of the committee,

Oregon is facing an unprecedented housing crisis that has only been exacerbated in 2020 by the COVID-19 pandemic. At last count, in 2018, it was estimated that Oregon had upwards of 23,000 homeless students and over 15,000 homeless individuals. We need to come together to support vulnerable families struggling to pay for necessities including food, clothing and shelter – Providence is proud to support LC 18 and the assistance it will provide for Oregonians.

Over the last ten years, Providence Health & Services has partnered with a range of community organizations, government agencies and regional health systems to address the growing issue of houselessness across Oregon. In 2016, Providence and five other health care organizations pledged \$21.5 million to Central City Concern's Housing as Health initiative which supported 382 new affordable housing units. To build on this investment an expanded partnership has taken shape through the Regional Supportive Investment Housing Fund, a collaborative strategic planning effort to reduce houselessness for our most vulnerable community members with an emphasis on equity.

As the level of need has continued to grow over the last decade, Providence also established Community Outreach and Peer Support programs to support individuals, whether that is outside, in shelters or in their homes. By combining social support with clinical services to address chronic illness, mental health issues and substance-use disorders, Providence is meeting people where they are and working toward serving the whole person's needs. This program has achieved great success and improved people's lives in tangible, long-term ways, but state action is needed to fund the level of investment needed.

The relationship between health and housing is critical, which is why Providence is actively engaged in finding housing solutions and strongly supports the statewide investments outlined in LC 18. Preventing evictions and keeping people in their homes as we overcome the barriers COVID-19 will increase access to safe, stable and affordable housing in our communities and ensure we are not facing an even greater challenge this time next year. We are also pleased that the package includes supports for landlords, particularly for those who continue to provide access to affordable workforce housing which is in such short supply.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment. We look forward to partnering with the state and our community partners in this critical work.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James Harker".

James Harker
Chief Executive, Population Health
Providence Health & Services – Oregon