

March 1, 2021

Chair Julie Fahey
House Committee on Housing
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301



RE: Support for HB 2001 -1 and Modernizing Oregon's Homeless System

Dear Chair Fahey, Vice-Chair Morgan, Vice-Chair Campos, and Members of the Committee:

I'm writing in support of House Bill 2100 and the -1 amendment. This bill represents the first step in creating a coordinated and concerted statewide homelessness response that focuses on outcomes for vulnerable Oregonians, ensures equitable services for all, and brings more seats to the table. More and more of our friends and neighbors are experiencing homelessness in communities across the state, now is the time to revisit our crisis response system to ensure it is explicitly designed address disparities in homeless outcomes.

I serve as the Executive Director of Portland Homeless Family Solutions, a nonprofit that empowers homeless families with children to get back into housing and stay there. We operate programs across the spectrum of homeless services including emergency shelter, rapid re-housing, and homeless prevention. We are located in east Multnomah County in the Lents neighborhood of Portland.

The scale of housing instability and homelessness in Oregon requires continued bold, strategic, and inclusive action. In the 2021 session, you have the opportunity to make progress towards an inclusive homeless response system that allows culturally specific organizations and smaller providers to be part of the solution.

For too long, our funding systems in Oregon have relied on decades-old practices and statutes that are steeped in white dominant cultural thinking, are not transparent, and do not have the accountability mechanisms we need to ensure best practices are followed and to produce the kind of outcomes we want in our homeless service systems across the state. T

If approved, HB 2100 would ensure that state homeless programs utilize best practices and provide culturally responsive services. As outlined in the 2019 Point-in-Time Count, in almost every county in the state, people of color represent a greater proportion of people experiencing homelessness than they do in the county's general population.

Oregon's current statute excludes all but eighteen organizations from working with the state on homelessness solutions. All but eighteen organizations are excluded from providing advise to Oregon Housing and Community Services, excluded from providing advice to the Housing Stability Council, and excluded from directly receiving state and federal resources from the state to address our local homelessness crisis. Our organization has spent the last two decades

becoming experts at serving homeless families with children and doing so in a culturally responsive, trauma informed way. We have best practice information and expertise that would help the state of Oregon create a stronger homeless response system, yet we are excluded from these tables and the opportunity for direct funding from state and federal resources. It feels like a real missed opportunity for our entire state.

HB 2100 ensures all communities receive the resources they currently do while allowing new local providers a seat at the table and elevating equity and racial justice priorities. It creates service equity standards and aligns the state's homelessness response with best practices. Importantly, given how many of our friends and neighbors are sleeping on our streets, the bill creates more opportunities to focus on unsheltered homelessness.

The passage of HB 2100 will not create the perfect homeless response system, but it gets the process started to make our system more responsive to humanitarian crisis before us. The status quo is simply unacceptable, action must be taken this session. I support the -1 amendment and ongoing conversations to improve Oregon's homeless response system.

I urge you to support HB 2100 in this legislative session. I also support the Housing Alliance proposal to create a Task Force to dive into some of these questions, but I urge you to also pass pieces of HB2100 that allow us to start the work of moving Oregon forward.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brandi Tuck", with a horizontal line extending from the end of the signature.

Brandi Tuck
Executive Director, Portland Homeless Family Solutions