



February 23, 2021

House Committee on Housing  
Oregon State Legislature  
900 Court Street NE  
Salem, OR 97301

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

I am writing to you today on behalf of the Oregon Housing Alliance to express our support for HB 2006 and HB 2004, which will support the siting of shelters in communities in more parts of our state, and addresses a critical need for safe shelter for people experiencing homelessness.

The Oregon Housing Alliance is a coalition of more than ninety organizations from all parts of the state. Our members have come together with the knowledge that housing opportunity is the foundation on which all of our success is built – individual success as students, parents, workers, and community members as well as the success of our communities. We represent a diverse set of voices including affordable housing developers, residents of affordable housing, local jurisdictions, and organizations working to meet basic needs in every corner of our state.

All Oregonians deserve a safe, stable, and affordable place to call home.

We know that prior to the pandemic, many seniors, families, and people who experience disabilities are paying too much of their income towards rent, and may be experiencing housing instability. In Oregon, three out of four households with extremely low incomes pay over half of their income towards rent. When people pay a significant portion of their income towards rent, they have too little money left over for food, medicine, utilities, and an emergency may mean they end up experiencing homelessness.

Oregon also has one of the highest rates of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness, meaning they are sleeping outside, in a tent, or a car. In 2019, Oregon Housing and Community Services commissioned a study of shelter<sup>1</sup> in our state, and found that Oregon is one of four states where more than half of people experiencing homelessness don't have access to shelter. In Oregon, 61% of people experiencing homelessness are unsheltered. This high rate is directly due to the lack of availability of shelter in our community. In addition, some people seeking shelter are unable to access it due to barriers in shelter – they cannot stay with their partner or their pet because of shelter capacity or policy.

It is important to note that people of color disproportionately experience homelessness and housing instability due to historic and systemic discrimination in housing and employment, and many other factors. People experiencing unsheltered homelessness are disproportionately people of color, compared to their percentage of the general population.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.oregon.gov/ohcs/ISD/RA/Oregon-Statewide-Shelter-Study.pdf>

Multnomah County's 2019 Point in Time Count report<sup>2</sup> notes:

*“Institutional, systemic and interpersonal racism are among the structural causes of homelessness. The main consequence is an overrepresentation of communities of color in the homeless population. This means that there are disproportionately high rates of people identifying with various racial and ethnic groups in the homeless population as compared to their share of the general population.*

*The 2019 PIT Count indicates that people of color as a whole, and people identifying as American Indian or Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, and Black or African American, in particular, were overrepresented in the HUD homeless population. While some communities, including the Latinx community, do not appear to be overrepresented based on this year's PIT Count data, there are multiple cultural and political factors that organizations working in these communities have identified as likely leading those communities of color to be significantly undercounted in the PIT Count. And as explained earlier, the use of HUD's definition of homelessness, which omits the doubled-up population, further obscures the true level of overrepresentation for many communities of color.”*

The national Supporting Partnerships for Anti-Racist Communities (SPARC) report on homelessness and disparities notes<sup>3</sup>: *“Although Black people comprise 13% of the general population in the United States and 26% of those living in poverty, they account for more than 40% of the homeless population suggesting that poverty rates alone do not explain the overrepresentation.”*

Systemic racism and the racism found in housing and employment (and other systems) is one of the structural causes of homelessness. BIPOC communities who disproportionately experience homelessness, and unsheltered homelessness, are more likely to experience the many negative consequences of unsheltered homelessness. A recent study by Portland State University's Homeless Research Action Collaborative found:

*“The results of the survey reveal profound racial disparities even in basic answers about who accesses shelter or who pitches tents. More than 1 in 4 people of color slept on the streets without a tent compared to only 1 in 10 people who are white.”<sup>4</sup>*

People experiencing homelessness are our neighbors and members of our community.

Sleeping outside is not safe, and providing an opportunity for safety either in shelter or an affordable home is critical. HB 2006 would help address this problem by removing barriers to identifying locations where shelters can be placed. HB 2006 would temporarily remove barriers to siting shelters and require local jurisdictions to allow shelters without regard for land use laws in their communities until June 30, 2022.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://multco.us/file/82568/download>, p.5

<sup>3</sup> <https://c4innovates.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/SPARC-Phase-1-Findings-March-2018.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.streetroots.org/news/2020/12/02/opinion-what-do-people-experiencing-homelessness-need>

The proposal includes important sideboards to ensure that the shelter space is adequate and protects occupants from health or safety concerns, and ensures the organization operating the shelter is qualified or is partnering with an experienced shelter provider. These provisions also require that these shelters be placed within urban growth boundaries or within rural residential lands, as well as preventing shelters in places such as wetlands, helping to add sideboards related to location.

Communities across our state – Corvallis, Portland, Bend, LaGrande, and others – have all struggled to site shelters for a range of reasons. The bold action proposed in HB 2006 will temporarily help support the siting of shelters, in order to address the emergency of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness. In addition to these temporary changes in land use laws, HB 2004 would also dedicate financial resources to shelter capacity, technical assistance from OHCS, navigation centers in specific communities, and more.

In addition, HB 2006 would focus on the creation of shelter with as few barriers as possible, and shelters that operate using best practices. We know that shelter best practices vary depending on who is being served – a shelter for families may need to operate differently than a shelter for youth or a shelter for adults – and our communities need more types of shelter for more people.


Shelter is not a permanent solution to homelessness. We need more shelters to provide a safe place to sleep for people experiencing homelessness, while we work to address our housing needs by creating more safe, stable, and affordable homes.

Our state must respond to the housing challenges our communities are facing by making serious investments in housing opportunity and safety, particularly for people with the lowest incomes in our communities.

We urge your support of HB 2004 and HB 2006.

Thank you very much for your time, and for your service to our state.

Sincerely,



Alison McIntosh  
On Behalf of the Oregon Housing Alliance

## Housing Alliance Members

1000 Friends of Oregon  
211info  
Aging in the Gorge  
Benton Habitat for Humanity  
Bienestar  
Bradley Angle  
BRIDGE Housing  
Business for a Better Portland  
CASA of Oregon  
Central City Concern  
Chrisman Development  
Church Women United of Lane County  
City of Beaverton  
City of Eugene  
City of Forest Grove  
City of Hillsboro  
City of Hood River  
City of Portland  
City of Tigard  
Clackamas County  
Coalition of Community Health Clinics  
Coalition of Housing Advocates  
College Housing Northwest  
Community Action Partnership of Oregon  
Community Action Team  
Community Alliance of Tenants  
Community Development Partners  
Community Housing Fund  
Community Partners for Affordable Housing  
Community Vision  
Cornerstone Community Housing  
DevNW  
Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon  
Enterprise Community Partners  
Fair Housing Council of Oregon  
Farmworker Housing Development Corp.  
FOOD for Lane County  
Habitat for Humanity of Oregon  
Habitat for Humanity Portland/Metro East  
Hacienda CDC  
Home Forward  
Homes for Good  
Housing Authorities of Oregon  
Housing Authority of Clackamas County  
Housing Development Center  
Housing Oregon  
Human Solutions  
Immigrant & Refugee Community Organization

Impact Northwest  
Innovative Housing, Inc.  
Interfaith Alliance on Poverty  
JOIN  
Lane County Health and Human Services  
League of Oregon Cities  
League of Women Voters of Oregon  
Lincoln County  
Looking Glass Community Services  
Mainstream Housing Inc.  
Metro  
Mid-Columbia Housing Authority  
NAYA Family Center  
Neighborhood Partnerships  
NeighborImpact  
NeighborWorks Umpqua  
Network for Oregon Affordable Housing  
Northwest Housing Alternatives  
Northwest Pilot Project  
Oregon AFSCME Council 75  
Oregon Coalition of Christian Voices  
Oregon Center for Public Policy  
Oregon Coalition on Housing & Homelessness  
Oregon Council on Developmental Disabilities  
Oregon Food Bank  
Our Children Oregon  
Partners for a Hunger-Free Oregon  
Portland Community Reinvestment Initiatives  
Portland Homeless Family Solutions  
Portland: Neighbors Welcome  
Proud Ground  
Raphael House  
REACH CDC  
Residents Organizing for Change (ROC) Oregon  
Rogue Action Center  
Rose CDC  
St. Francis Shelter  
St. Vincent de Paul of Lane County, Inc.  
ShelterCare  
Sisters Habitat for Humanity  
Sponsors, Inc.  
SquareOne Villages  
Street Roots  
Think Real Estate  
Transition Projects  
Washington County  
Welcome Home Coalition